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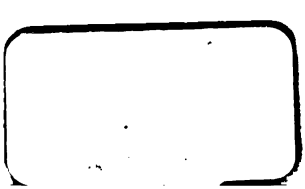

PATHWAYS OF MANY PILGRIMS.

PATHWAYS OF MANY PILGRIMS;

OR,

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

BY

THE REV. W. K. TWEEDIE, D.D.,
AUTHOR OF "SEED-TIME AND HARVEST," "THE EARLY CHOICE," ETC.

As radiant tints of rosy hue
Are heralds of the perfect day,
We mortals trace the heavenward way
By foot-prints of the good and true.

With heart and hope they bid us climb;
They urge and cheer, they warn or chide:
Then choose these beacons for thy guide,
To light thee to their home sublime.

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PREFACE.

THE study of Biography has at all times been a favourite pursuit with minds of every order—from the infantine to the most mature—from youth just entering upon life to hoary age when on the eve of commencing its endless existence. In that Book which constitutes a literature, or a library by itself,—the Inspired Book of God,—Biography is the staple mode of teaching; the highest wisdom has consecrated it to the interests of eternity. Doctrines the most profound and wide-reaching—joys which forestall the blessedness of hereafter—promises which rival the stars of the midnight sky both in number and in brightness, are all communicated to man through the medium of Biography.

And as He who knew what was in man, employed that medium to convey the thoughts of Heaven to us on earth, it has been used by the wise in all ages for imparting instruction, for augmenting the happiness of the happy, or shedding light on them that sit in darkness. The great mind of Edmund Burke was moulded and helped forward to maturity in its

grand career by the study of Plutarch's Lives. The same Book formed the mind and fed the patriotism (such as it was) of Madame Roland, one of the countless victims of the French Revolution—a woman so gifted that she at one period reigned as Queen of France, and was actually called by that name. But it is needless to multiply examples: the truth is admitted that by means of Biography men are more easily instructed where they are ignorant, or guided where they might go astray, than by any other mode of culture.

The present age, beyond all the past, has indorsed that conviction. As surely as death removes from us the gifted or the good,—the patriot, the warrior, or the statesman,—the philanthropist, the humble believer, or the earnest student,—we may expect to be told all the details of their earthly career, and even some of the incidents which had better been concealed. Some, indeed, affect to deplore this state of things, and have made merry at what takes place in regard to modern Biographies. But in vain. As well expect that rivers shall not flow, or that summer shall not bring us flowers and sunshine.

Nor is there any difficulty in explaining this tendency. There is not a human being, however lowly or obscure, who is not a centre of influence for good or for ill during his sojourn here. That becomes conspicuously true in some remarkable cases, such as Harlan Page, or Palissy the Potter, or Sarah Martin, or John Pounds. But the same thing takes place in far more limited

spheres. No man *can* live to himself, however much he may attempt it. He can no more divest himself of influence for good, if he be a Christian, than the rose can discard its odour; or of influence for evil, if he be not a Christian, than the leopard can change his spots! Man, in short, is born under a law of influence. In spite of him, he propagates the evil or the good that is in his life; and according to that law, a deed, a word, or a look may produce an effect which shall circulate round the globe, or continue unspent for ever and ever! And this is no speculation; it is realized from day to day, and will continue to be realized while man is man. The approving kiss which the mother of Benjamin West gave him in early boyhood, on account of a promising picture, made him, as he tells us, a painter; and similar things have happened in myriads of cases. The trivial may here become the vast, the transient be linked to eternity.

Under that impression, an attempt is here made to set the truth which came from heaven to guide us to it, in a clearer light, by referring to the lives of men, as they welcomed or repelled the heavenly message. About one hundred and thirty, of all ages, all professions, and all characters, have been selected, and their doings or their opinions, their good or their evil, employed to shed light upon what is of more value to man than all the gold of Ophir—the Truth of the Eternal. The Lives of the bad are employed as the shade, or the dark background, by which to bring out more vividly

the place and the prominence that are due to the good. The attempt is one to plant beacons upon rocks, and at the same time to show through what impediments it is that mortals reach the home where the weary are at rest. Most diverse are the characters which even the simplest truth puts on as it is embodied in the life of man. What rouses some to delight, depresses others to sadness. What prompts hope to one mind, is perverted into a cause of despair in another. The restraints of truth which chafe or madden one class, are viewed by others as the thorns by which their way is in kindness hedged up. A knowledge of these diversities, or contrasts, is fraught with interest the most intense for the man who loves to study his brother man, and to convey some of that knowledge is one design of the following pages.

It were wrong, however, not to observe that all these diversities, in as far as they are proofs of error, of weakness, or of imperfection, should point us evermore to the One Man,—the God-man,—in whom all perfection had its centre or its seat. To that every lesson should tend, if it is to advance our preparedness for life eternal. Round the Sun of Righteousness all truth should revolve, or to him it should be attracted as the stars of our system to the sun in the sky; and if that be here done with any measure of success, He whose eye is on the truth will own it and bless it to promote the ascendency of goodness in some minds more.

Once more: amid the diversities of life and character which are here sketched or glanced at, it should be borne

in mind, that in as far as characters are Christian, they are essentially one in spirit, one in allegiance to truth, one in the terminus to which they are advancing,—glory; and one in the power which upholds, or the wisdom which guides them,—God's. There may be flashing wit like that of Rowland Hill; there may be subtlety like that of Augustine; there may be calm courage, which can face the flames rather than deny the Saviour, like that of Polycarp; there may be lofty intellect like that of Jonathan Edwards; there may be melting tenderness, approaching to mysticism, like that of Fenelon; there may be lion-like boldness, such as Luther's; but whatever be the diversities, if the Spirit who gave the Truth be leading men into the knowledge of it, they all blend into one—they form a bright constellation; like the primary colours when all combined, they compose one pure white. There never has been more than two *religions* on the earth—the religion of sinless man, and the religion of sinful man; of Eden while it was untainted as the snow on the summits of the Alps, and of the world outside of Eden, after sin had tarnished its beauty and withered its bloom. That radical truth *should* appear in every page that follows.

Finally, then, it will be understood that the main object of the following chapters is to accomplish what Neander graphically describes, when he speaks of "leading men back to Him who is the well-spring from whom the full flowing fountain of divine life gushes forth in all its purity." Christ alone is to be exalted—that men

may be drawn or driven from their refuges of lies—that imputed righteousness, or Christ's, and inwrought righteousness, or the Spirit's, may never be confounded—and that believers may be taught to rejoice as God would have them, exclusively and alone in Him who "always causeth us to triumph." We believe that it is right to be zealously affected in a good thing, and without zealous affection true religion does not exist; but yet, instead of leaving the soul in the fond delusion that it may be safe while self-righteously lamenting its darkness, or any other defect, we would make it plain that never is the sinner safe except as he cleaves to Him who is all our salvation, and to whom all our fears should drive us, and all our hopes attract. The accomplishment of that blessed result is the great object of the written Word—of the Christian ministry—of the Spirit's convictions—and of God's providential dispensations with his Church.

CONTENTS.

Chap.		Page
I.	Man in Eden, ...	11
II.	Fallen Man, ...	21
III.	The Hidden Life, ...	31
IV.	The Work of the Spirit, ...	43
V.	The Counterfeits of the Spirit's Work, ...	55
VI.	The Soul Awakened to Self-Knowledge, ...	65
VII.	The Soul in Earnest, but not Converted, ...	75
VIII.	The Convert. Part I., ...	85
IX.	The Convert. Part II., ...	99
X.	The Convert—Mistakes. Part III., ...	117
XI.	The Diversities of Christian Experience, ...	129
XII.	The Wanderings of Israel, a Type of the Believer's, ...	139
XIII.	The Divided Heart, ...	151
XIV.	The Young Convert—his Experience, ...	161
XV.	Youthful Godliness—the Genuine and the Counterfeit,	173
XVI.	The Believer's Warfare, ...	185
XVII.	The Self-Condemned Believer, ...	195
XVIII.	The Unstable Believer, ...	205
XIX.	The Believer Established, ...	217
XX.	The Believer Rejoicing, ...	227
XXI.	The Courageous Christian, ...	237
XXII.	The Intellectual Christian—his Dangers, ...	247
XXIII.	The Christian Under the Cross, ...	265
XXIV.	The Backslider, ...	277
XXV.	Despair, ...	289

Chap.		Page
XXVI.	The Believer in Darkness—Mental Aberration, ...	301
XXVII.	The Morbid Religionist, ...	311
XXVIII.	The Visionary—Popish Ecstatics, ...	321
XXIX.	The Sentimentalist, ...	333
XXX.	The Mystic, ...	345
XXXI.	Faith in its Simplicity, ...	357
XXXII.	Growth in Grace, ...	369
XXXIII.	Light in the Lord, ...	381
XXXIV.	Perfect Peace, ...	391
XXXV.	The Ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit, ...	405
XXXVI.	The True Catholic, ...	419
XXXVII.	The Communion of Saints, ...	433
XXXVIII.	The Experience of David—a Model, ...	445
XXXIX.	The Experience of the Ungodly, ...	457
XL.	An Irreligious Old Age—the Experience of the Dying,	471
XLI.	Glory, ...	493
XLII.	The Believer's Experience a Proof of Religion, ...	503

CHAPTER I.

Man in Eden.

"——Then let us not think hard
One easy prohibition, who enjoy
Free leave so large to all things else, and choice
Unlimited of manifold delights;
But let us ever praise Him, and extol
His bounty, following our delightful task
To prune these growing plants, and tend these flowers,
Which, were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet."

MILTON.

Man in Eden.

Human religions—God's—The religion of man while sinless—And when sinful—In the one, no Mediator—In the other, all is delusive apart from the Mediator—Grace—The need of it—Its place and influence—The religion of gifted but not godly men—Its results.

THE TRUTH which guides man back to happiness has been always essentially the same, though it has appeared in forms as numerous as the countenances of men are diverse. Sorrow and joy; youth and old age; climate, country, and constitution, all help to modify the appearance, while the essence is unchanged.

But in studying the different forms of religion which prevail among men who profess to be followers of Christ, we find them reducible in general to three:—*First*, Some continue to speak and act as if there had never been a fall; as if man were still in Eden, and could serve his God without any doubt of acceptance. *Secondly*, Others grant that there has been a fall, or that some great moral disaster has occurred upon earth, but they do not understand either the extent and nature of the woe, or the divine method of remedying the disaster, and restoring man from its effects. And *Thirdly*, There are some who recognise all the ruin occasioned by the fall, who feel its effects within and behold them around them, and who therefore give all due prominence to the divine remedy for that which forms the origin of all our misery. They feel that a mortal disease is wasting us, that we are so completely disorganized or distempered, that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,

and that without a remedy which is divine that disease will prove fatal in all. Now, it is obvious that if we overlook either the fall itself, or the divine remedy for it, in any respect, or to any degree, we must wander into hopeless error; our system, based upon ignorance or perversion, can in that case only augment our misery; and it is therefore of profound importance that our views be clear with regard to the difference between the religion which Adam needed, when he was pure as his Creator is pure, and the religion which he needed or which his children require, now that sin has corrupted and polluted all the sons of men. If I am still acting on the supposition that God in his ineffable holiness, and man in his inborn defilement, can walk together, I am unconsciously or rather in spite of solemn warnings, annihilating the distinction between the pure and the impure; and the right understanding of this is the turning-point between the religion of life and the religion of death—that is, the religion of God and the religion of man.

To make this clear, we observe, what is indeed manifest at a glance, that Adam, while unfallen, needed no mediator between his soul and his Maker, and in his religion accordingly no mediator was appointed. He was pure, spotless, untainted, and could come into the presence of his God without one feeling of alarm. There might be deepest reverence; there might be profoundest awe upon the creature's spirit; but there was no compunction, no terror, no chiding conscience, no feeling of guilt, no reason why he should recoil from the scrutiny of his God. The holy Creator and the holy creature could meet and commune then, because their natures were still identical,—like a drop and the ocean, or a ray of light and the sun. Adam could thus ask and receive without any to intercede or to make his peace with God. He could offer his thanksgiving for daily blessings, without any sacrifice to make his thanksgiving acceptable. The offering of Cain would then have been sufficient, while the sacrifice of Abel would have been

superfluous, or unmeaning, or a sin. All, in short, was in perfect concord between the holy God and holy man: the blessedness of Adam was perfect, in direct communion with Him at whose creative word he came into being, and in whom his soul was made to find its blessedness to the full. In untainted Eden no obstacle lay in the way to prevent untainted man from approaching the Holy One, and the pure creature, made in the image, also rejoiced in the favour, of the pure Creator.

But the instant that sin found a lodgment in the heart of man, all this was changed; the antagonism between the holy and the unholy commenced; and now, there must either be a new religion devised, adapted to the new circumstances, or man is clean gone for ever. As soon as the creature became polluted, there was a gulf of separation between him and the holy God. Their natures became diverse, nay opposed, and it was no longer possible, in the nature of things, for the two to hold communion. As man had been changed, and become a sinner, and as God could neither change nor look upon sin except as a judge to condemn it, their friendship was for ever at an end; and either God must become less holy, or some new form of religion must be made known, ere the ever Holy One and now unholy man could walk together again. No imaginable contrast is greater or more intense than that which exists between them; for fire and water—light and darkness—pain and pleasure—peace and war, are not so essentially distinct, as God in his holiness from man in his sin.

It is true, that we who are born in sin, and who, if left to ourselves, would live and die committing it, do not feel all the force of this humbling conclusion. We think lightly of sin, and transfer our light thoughts to Jehovah. Because we find pleasure in it, we cannot comprehend, or we never suspect that God over all regards it as the Bible says he does. But the instant that we are enabled to see the real character of sin—as soon as we understand that it not merely wars against

the soul, but against the soul's Creator—when we discover the perfect antagonism which exists between the Holy One and every sinful one, then hope disappears; and as long as we know only the religion which Adam knew before he fell, conscience is either seared or wretched, and the soul felt to be undone. That soul may pray, but sin cleaves to its prayers—and is not sin the antagonist of the God to whom we pray? How, then, can he hear and answer, or how can we cherish hope? That soul may try to repent—but does not sin mingle with our very repentance? do not our very tears need to be washed in the blood that cleanses, so that despair and not hope is increased? In short, while we know only that religion which Adam knew before he fell, we are without God, and without hope in the world. Though it was perfectly adapted to a sinless being, it altogether fails—it furnishes no help, and yields no joy—it is utterly worthless or ineffectual—to a sinful one.

Here, then, we are prepared to welcome the grand peculiarity of the religion under which it is our blessedness to live. Adam when created needed no mediator, for he had no sin. We, on the other hand, cannot approach God without a mediator; for all that we can do is polluted, and the only thing we can absolutely call our own is iniquity. If there be no daysman between God and us, to lay his hand upon us both, then are we for ever severed from him—our sin, like a whirlwind, has taken us away. If there be no blood to cleanse, holiness is for ever, because essentially, separated from impurity. But with a daysman between us, we can draw nigh again—we can cherish new hope—we can plead new arguments—we can rest on new strength. We have a new religion adapted to our new condition; and the grand peculiarity of that religion is, that a Mediator between the holy God and unholy man has brought those nigh who were before afar off—has introduced harmony where essential opposition existed—has reconciled man to God, and God to man, and spread the joy of redemption where the gloom of im-

pending death reigned unbroken before. It is true, on the one hand, that no man can come to the Father but by the Son; but it is no less true, on the other, that those who come by the Son will in no wise be rejected. That is the gospel of the grace of God—the glad tidings of great joy to all kindreds, and people, and tongues. It is the remedy for the soul's disease, the panacea of its misery, the fountain of its hope, that all things are now in the hands of a Mediator.

Perhaps this single distinction between the religion of a sinless being and the religion of a sinful one, might suffice for our present purpose. But to render the subject as distinct as we can, and to fix it firmly in the mind, we observe farther, that Adam, while unfallen, needed no Grace, in our sense of that word. His mind naturally tended Godward. Every thing then pointed him to his chief good; and in a far higher sense than David, Adam could say, "I follow hard after thee." Literally, our first father lived, and moved, and had his being in God. The flowers which shed their beauty, or the animals which rejoiced in their innocence beside him, all spoke to him of God, and he rejoiced to hear them speak. Instead of finding it a weariness to wait on God, as man when fallen does, Adam—while holy, harmless, undefiled—rejoiced in communion with Jehovah; and the river of which we read, that "it went out of Eden to water the garden," did not flow more naturally down, or more copiously carry fertility wherever it winded, than Adam's affections—his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind—naturally flowed toward his God. His religion was all nature, all spontaneous then; it was not the result of any external influence or application, but just the joyous flowing forth of a soul whose nature was to be happy in God, and could find —nay, could seek—no other resting-place but him.

But when man passed into the state of an alienated sinner, all this was changed. A new power must now be brought to bear upon him before he will think of God at all. In other words, here also religion in a new

form is needed to meet the new condition of fallen man. The Spirit of all grace must work in him to will and to do of God's good pleasure. What nature did in sinless man, grace must do in sinful man, before he can be willing in the day of God's power; and we accordingly find, that in the Word of God the religion of a sinner is all ascribed to grace—to grace in God—and not to power in man. Is the plan of salvation to be mentioned?—Then it is said that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Are we told that a sinner has passed from death to life?—Then it is by the grace of God given unto him—"I am what I am by the grace of God that is in me." Is that sinner advancing in his way, and walking more closely with his God?—Then it is because the grace of God is made sufficient for him. Or, finally, is the spiritual fabric completed? is the habitation of God through the Spirit reared and adorned, and is the copestone put on?—Then all that is done with "shoutings of grace, grace unto it." Nature was enough before man fell; nothing but grace—the free and sovereign grace of God—can suffice since sin began; and it is one of our most deadly and darkening errors, still to speak and act as if nature could achieve what only omnipotent grace can accomplish. It is a sentence recorded against fallen man—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;" and preparatory to that, wo after wo is often the sinner's lot on earth. His heart is torn by anguish; his conscience is convulsed by fear; his soul is enslaved by superstition; and all that can distress at once the body and the mind is from time to time endured. Ten thousand sorrows are crowded into his lot. Like the whole creation, he groans and travails in pain, and the gloomy grave closes the vista of all. But neither the prospect of death and judgment, nor any mere temporal wo by itself, will ever make man seek his God in earnest. Till grace has come to sway his heart and soul, all is powerless as the rain-drop in the desert, or the dew upon the granite rock.

And this is accordingly another point at which we may clearly understand the difference between the religion of a sinless creature and the religion of a sinful one. In the one case, nature, reason, conscience, make a man godly. In the other, nature, reason, conscience, are all feeble, at least they are strong mainly in opposing God; and, till grace has come to rectify nature, to guide reason, and to quicken conscience—he that is unjust will be unjust still—he that is polluted will be polluted still—he that is ungodly will be ungodly still—he can laugh at every human appliance like leviathan at a straw. It is counter, no doubt, to the opinions current among men—but it is a truth notwithstanding—nay, it is the very truth of God, that neither nature, nor reason, nor conscience, can savingly guide fallen man to God: grace must do it, or it will never be done. Nature, reason, conscience, could guide Adam before he fell; but, after his fall, he and all his descendants need a different form of religion—and that is the religion of grace. It is the verdict of the judicious Owen, that "unless we are restored unto our primitive rectitude, a religion suited unto the principles of our reason will not serve our turns." *

Were the simple distinction on which we have dwelt clearly apprehended, and constantly kept in view, it would guide us amid many perplexities, and keep us from many an error. For, read the lives of gifted but not godly men, and what is it that we notice there? Amid many sins we find them speaking and acting as if the God of Eden were still their God, or upon the strange assumption that man is still walking there untainted and unfallen. There is no fear—no alarm—all is unmoved within them, as if Jehovah had never pronounced a sentence, nor man exposed himself to wrath. Or resort to the deathbeds of worldly men, and what is it that we notice there? After threescore years and ten of oblivion of God, nay, of habitual sin against him, they are speaking, and hoping, and dying

* Works, Goold's Edition, vol. v., p. 45.

upon principles that would have been sound and safe were men still in Eden, but which are fallacious and deadly because man is fallen and polluted. Sinai is forgotten; Calvary is but a name; the Saviour is little more; grace is deemed mystical and offensive; in one word, the religion which God revealed to fallen man is still unknown, even when the sinner is within a day, an hour, a breath, of his decisive meeting with the Judge. He has no bands in his death, no thought of judgment, no alarm at the sentence—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—We often hear the aged in their dotage speak with fond animation of the scenes and events of their youth. All the incidents which intervene are forgotten, but these are remembered well; and so is it often in regard to the religion of the infancy of our race. Men hold by it with a fond though a blind tenacity—they forget or they disown what our manhood and mature age require;—so true is it that the life of a believer is a hidden life, and that the secret of the Lord is only with them that fear him.

CHAPTER II.

Fallen Man.

"How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful, is man!
How passing wonder He who made him such!
Who centred in our make such strange extremes
* * * * *
Distinguished link in being's endless chain;
Midway from nothing to the Deity!
A beam ethereal, sullied and absorbed—
Though sullied and dishonoured, still divine!
Dim miniature of greatness absolute!
An heir of glory! a frail child of dust!
Helpless immortal! Insect infinite!
A worm! A God! I tremble at myself,
And in myself am lost!"

YOUNG.

Fallen Man.

The world's progress—Man's ignorance of himself—His true condition as seen by God—Illustrations from Scripture—From experience and history—From the condition of believers—Dr. Chalmers.

It is now true, in the widest sense, that there is nothing new under the sun. Our globe has been explored and ransacked through all its vast extent. The depths of the ocean have been fathomed. The highest mountains have been climbed. There is not an island of the sea which has not been visited, while the products of every land are profusely poured into our lap. As if men would invade the province of Omnipotence, they have weighed the hills in scales, and the mountains in a balance. The very lightning has been tamed, and turned into the menial of man. Nay, not satisfied with earth, he has travelled to the farthest star and the outskirts of creation, gathering knowledge in the milky way, and rejoicing to answer the challenge of Jehovah to Job: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

But while gathering knowledge from every source, as the bee gathers honey from every flower, there is one kind of knowledge which man may utterly overlook—the knowledge of himself. The stars may all be num

bered and named. The ocean may be fathomed. The earth may be all ransacked; but, in the mean time, man may be only fleeing from himself;—and it becomes of vital importance for us clearly to adjust the question —What is the condition of man by nature? What is the true account of man as a fallen being, needing a Saviour, and restoration through him alone to the rank from which the first Adam fell?

Now, we need not tarry to tell what diverse views have been entertained regarding man's nature. Some have argued that we are still what Adam was—that no sad change has passed upon our race—that our present condition is one of optimism—and that whatever is, is right. This is either blind fatalism, or as blind a purpose to efface the distinctions between the pure and the polluted. Others, again, concede that man is a fallen being, but extenuate the results of that moral disaster till sin ceases to be sin, and ruin to be ruin. But to the law and the testimony: only He who knows what is in man, can unfold man's real character as a fallen being; and he has done it in language which may be denied, but cannot be misunderstood. He declares that the imaginations of a man's heart are evil from his youth. He asks, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" He asserts that "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." It is written, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." It is added, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." We read in language too wide-reaching to be easily comprehended, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." We are told, in words as emphatic as they are humbling, that "we all had our conversation in times past among the children of disobedience, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by na-

ture the children of wrath, even as others." The Saviour says, with mingled energy and love, "The world hateth me, because I testify of its works that they are evil." Inspiration proclaims by Paul, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And, to quote no more, we read, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Such is Jehovah's delineation of man by nature. We need not wonder though in his pride he should resent it, and disown the charge involved in such averments. Comparing himself with the standards of earth, and not the pure requirements of the holy God, man denies that he is only evil, and that continually; but that very denial proves that he is perverse—so perverse, that he makes God a liar: like the detected criminal, he is proved to be sunk in sin by his very attempts at self-exculpation. Job pronounced a right judgment in the case, and the whole Word of God attests its soundness:—"If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch."

And experience in all ages has confirmed the declarations of the Word of God. Amid the generations that have passed away since Adam sinned and fell, is it not a marvel that not one has been found untainted and undefiled among all the sons of men? The world has now been explored through all its borders. We are familiar with the dwellers in every land, and we behold great diversities of natural disposition, from the ferocious cannibal to the timid natives of some islands in the Pacific. Among civilized men we also see every diversity of temperament and character; yet how can we explain the fact, that not one has ever been discovered —at least only one untainted Man—on earth through all its cyles and all its generations? Is it not strange, that not a solitary child has appeared in the prima[1]

purity of our race—not a youth grown up to manhood without contracting guilt—not one aged descendant of Adam who has not gone to the grave a sinner against God, either flagrantly rebelling, or at least too often oblivious of the Father of lights, the author of every good and perfect gift? Through all the endless diversities of character, and country, and condition, which prevail among mankind, one thing is unvarying, nay, identical. It clings to them like a portion of themselves. It is seated at the very centre of vitality and energy. It presides with despotic or resistless authority over all that they do; so that, amid all the myriads who have lived and moved on earth, not one solitary unit has been found—nay, not one thought has flitted through the mind—not one word escaped from the lip—not one deed been done by the hand, in which the holy eye of God did not detect imperfection and sin. Now, why is this? Whence such universal defilement? Surely an universal practice betokens an universal law, and that is, the law of sin and death, which reigns in the constitution of fallen man from Adam's day till this.

But the whole has not been told. Not only is man thus universally sinful; he has continued so in many cases, in spite of every appliance and every means that might have helped to counteract his tendencies to evil. It has often been noticed, that even childhood, in its earliest displays of character, exhibits the true condition of man. Give a child the best of all examples, it has been argued; let the prayers of a godly mother be added to the authority of a Christian father; let an example guided by the Word of God be set, and lessons fetched from the same holy source be imparted; let error be corrected as soon as it appears; let affection the warmest, and care the most scrupulous, watch over the opening mind, and try to lead it up to God, or in the paths of righteousness;—and what may be the result of all this painstaking, and effort, and prayer? It is possible, —nay, it has often happened,—that such nurslings of Christian affection have grown up in waywardness, and

only proved by their conduct how boldly they could violate the truth which had been taught—how recklessly they could trifle with a mother's half-broken heart—how unfeelingly bring a father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. "Iniquity is bound up in the heart of a child." "They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies," is the inference from the whole; and as that is reason's conclusion, it is religion's announcement on the authority of the God of gods.

There remains still another witness to be heard in this matter. Where men are allowed to grow up without care and culture, sin is rampant, and the life is stained by dark, atrocious crimes. Even where care the most scrupulous is taken, many spurn all restraint, and drink up iniquity as the ox drinketh water. But we have further to consult the experience of the people of God; and what is their testimony on the subject of sin? Their life is one long complaint against its insinuating or its domineering power. Taking the Word of God for their standard, and testing their lives by it, they have ever been ready to lay the hand upon the mouth, and the mouth in the dust. When they would do good, evil is present with them. Even though, like the Baptist, or like Timothy, they may have been impressed by the truth in youth, sin ever seeks to have dominion. It cleaves to them when they would study the Word; it mingles with their prayers and all their efforts, and "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" is often the language which indwelling sin extorts from their very hearts. In other cases, where youth was spent in frivolity and sin, myriads have then heaped up sources of bitter lamentation for their future years; and when made to possess the sins of their youth, they gave unequivocal testimony to the fact, that man is, in consequence of the fall, without God in the world. Parents, brothers, friends, are loved—God is an exception. Benefactors are honoured or revered—the Saviour is utterly unheeded. All that can fit us for time and its duties, is perhaps assiduously sought, and some have

encompassed the world to prepare them for these cares; but eternity and its grandeur are entirely forgotten. Blessedness is sought by grovelling upon earth—the heart does not rise to the things that are above. The affections have no sympathy with the things that are where Christ sitteth at God's right hand.

But the evidence is not closed even yet. The complaints which are made by Christians who are taught by the Spirit, regarding their tendencies to sin, are utterly unintelligible to other men. So unintelligible are they, that they are often turned into topics of mirth, as if the godly were of all men the most miserable. Lampoon and caricature have followed when the Word of God became the standard of judgment, and holiness of heart and life the object of pursuit. A clear proof this, that the world does not judge as the Holy One judges—so inured is man to sin, so much is it the element in which he lives and rejoices, that he is unconscious, or will not be convinced, of its noxious effects. As in regions where malaria prevails, we may often see men walking to the grave under the wasting effects of disease, the power of sin is wasting men away, while they are regardless of its ravages,—nay, when those who have detected the disease complain of its virulence, thousands turn their complaints into mockery. So unconscious are myriads of the power which is dragging them to the second death, that they reject all premonitions, and deem it libellous to tell them that their heart and character are what Jehovah proclaims them to be.

Such, then, is the condition of fallen man. There are some tokens, no doubt, that man is not an utter ruin. He has been compared to the waste and desolate places of the Holy Land which, though apparently peeled and bare, are really treasuring up fertility, the result of many influences, preparatory to the restoration of Israel to their heritage. Man, in like manner, though degraded and trodden down, is not destroyed. He groans, and bleeds, and suffers, but his very sufferings

betoken natural vitality, as well as the possibility of his being vitalized in a yet higher sense. "The creature itself shall yet be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Withal, however, man *is* degraded, like an outcast, for the present, from his God. He is polluted, and he thinks he is pure. He is condemned, and he does not feel that he deserves it—nay, to speak the truth in love, he is under the curse of his God, and yet he lives anticipating a heaven to which he knows not the way. Of all the examples of this which modern times supply, none is more signal than that of Dr Chalmers. He long lived unconscious of his real condition, and without any real feeling that he was a sinner, or any heart-felt desire to escape from the consequences of sin. From the very pulpit he indignantly denounced those views of Jehovah's truth which relate to the guilt and the misery of man. "The rewards of heaven," he exclaimed, "are attached to the exercise of our virtuous affections." "Let us tremble to think that any thing but virtue can recommend us to the Almighty." So little did he know of the world of iniquity that exists in even a single member—the tongue *—that he deemed it the dictate of "a gloomy and unenlarged mind" to suppose that "the Author of nature required the death of Jesus merely for the reparation of violated justice." He argued that our "sincere but imperfect obedience is looked upon by heaven with a propitious eye." No feeling of the sinfulness of sin—no consciousness of its antagonism to God—no adequate knowledge of the Godhead's purity—no recognition of the effects of the fall, as they are presented in the oracles of God. It was reason, not revelation, that guided his mind. It was natural conscience, and not the Spirit of God, that controlled him; and while that is the case, man, however gifted, or genius, however soaring, can only grope, like the blind for the wall. The fountains of the great deep of sin must be broken up when no-

* James iii. 6.

thing else will do. The waters must sweep in anger over the gilded scene of moral carelessness or of crime, before the rainbow of peace can spread its arch in the sky; and when that is done, man's confidence in virtue and virtuous affections will be seen to be only a refuge of lies, a building on the sand, a labouring in the fire, a sowing of the wind to reap the whirlwind.

What unaided reason cannot grasp, nor mental power the most consummate comprehend, the Spirit of God has often explained to babes. The work of the Spirit, then, in the heart of man should be deeply pondered; for without it even the work of the Son of God would not avail to save the sons of men.

CHAPTER III.

The Hidden Life.

"O happy soul that lives on high,
While men lie grovelling here!
His hopes are fixed above the sky,
And faith forbids his fear. . . . .

He waits in secret on his God,
His God in secret sees;
Let earth be all in arms abroad,
He dwells in heavenly peace.

His pleasures rise from things unseen,
Beyond this world of time,
Where neither eyes nor ears have been,
Nor thoughts of mortals climb."

ANON.

The Hidden Life.

The mysteriousness of religion to unconverted men—Prayer—The study of the Word—Dr. Paley—The missionary spirit—Schwartz—Martyn—Macdonald—The martyr's spirit—Polycarp—His death—The safety of the hidden life in its *origin*—Its *nature*—Its *actings*—Its *consummation*.

THAT life which the Christian leads, after he is raised from death in sin by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is perfectly mysterious and incomprehensible to the men whom the Holy Spirit does not teach; it is "hid with Christ in God." If we follow some of the little birds which gladden the ear as they soar and sing, we sometimes find that they ascend so high into the blue above us, that our eye cannot discern them. Their song may flow down in richest melody to regale and arrest us, till we pause to gaze and listen; but we cannot see, we can only hear, the fountain of that gladness —and so it is with the life of a believer. It is something that lies beyond the ken and the scrutiny of all whom the Holy Spirit does not teach. The world may witness the efforts which that believer makes for the good of others in the cause of God; it may notice how the Christian changes his old habits and forsakes his old haunts, and it may assail him on that account; but the mainspring and the motive of these efforts the world cannot know. Or the peculiar joys of the believer may be told in richest description to those whom the Spirit does

not enlighten—but no created power can make these joys intelligible. When the Holy Spirit guides, and when Christ is felt to be near—when peace is spoken, and a sense of pardon enjoyed—then pleasures are imparted, which prove that earth is but a shadow, of which the reality is in heaven. Yet rich, and gladdening, and real, as these pleasures are, they are actually secreted from those who are not risen with Christ. They are like the way of a serpent on a rock, or of the vulture in the air, and are as little known as if they belonged to the doings of another race of beings, whose abode is in some other planet. Silently, like the influence of falling dew, or more openly, according to the sovereign will of God, a change is wrought—the result is manifest, but the producing power is unseen. "Salvation is come, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ,"—though the world cannot recognise it; and the proof and explanation of all this is found in the words which solve so many problems—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The hidden manna is shared by none but those who have the new name, which none can read except the wearer.

The fact that the believer's life is hid, that it is as unknown and as mysterious a thing to many as if it were written not in words but in cypher, may be made clear in various ways. Much of that life, for example, should be spent in prayer. Periodically, nay habitually, he should hold communion with God in Christ, the Father of his spirit. If we be indeed risen with Christ, and quickened by his Spirit, such holy communion will constitute one of our choicest blessings, and our best-prized enjoyments. What a reality does prayer give to things unseen! How near it brings God to us, and us to God! How precious it renders the only Mediator between God and man! How it brings rest, and peace, and light, and life, into the soul! How fully and ex-

perimentally it explains the work of the Spirit in the heart of a believer! In short, how much like things that may be tasted, touched, and handled, does prayer render the things that are unseen and eternal! Now, if we be risen with Christ, then all these things enter largely into our life, for we can no more live unto God without seeking these blessings, than we can live unto the world without contracting contamination from its pollution. Even in the case of the believer, his spirit cleaves to the dust in consequence of indwelling sin. The world's allurements—the besetting sin—the wiles and snares of the accuser of the brethren—all conspire to deaden and depress him, but still he has joys with which the world cannot intermeddle. The light of his Father's countenance, the blessedness of sin forgiven, of God's image restored to the soul, and foretastes of heaven imparted, tend to elevate him at times above the influence of earth. The believer, then, rejoices at seeing God who is invisible, and like the children of Zion, he is "joyful in his king."

And yet, in all this, our life is hid from the ken of those who are not risen with Christ. They cannot understand, and still less enjoy, the blessedness of prayer. All that is precious in it is a mysterious or impalpable thing; and the consequence is, that what the believer deems his highest privilege, is reckoned by many a wearisome bondage. Prayer is restrained, God is not honoured, and the soul is not blessed.

Again, the study of the Word of God, or the searching of the Scriptures, is another important element in the life of those who are risen with Christ. Some put aside all other books to ponder only on the Book of God. Others, who do not go so far, do yet, like the saintly Henry Martyn, immediately dismiss the works of men when the perusal of them unfits the mind for studying the Word of God. In brief, every believer in Christ makes that Word the daily bread of his soul. He there learns the wisdom of God. He is there told of the righteousness of God. He is there made a partaker

of the peace of God. He is there guided in the way to the dwelling-place of God, and his soul would be like a vessel on a stormy sea, without a pilot or a helm, were it not for that Word, which is a light to the believer's feet, and a lamp to the believer's path.

Yet familiar as all this is to the man that is risen with Christ, or quickened by the Spirit of God, how incomprehensible is it all to many! Some, after their conversion, have put it upon record, that for years previous to that awakening change, they had never read the Word of God. Its pages were repulsive. Its message of mercy was a riddle. Its love unto death was unheeded; and surely the life whose chief joy is found in the study of God's Word, is all a hidden thing to such men. The temple of truth is still unentered by them; and he who is risen with Christ understands all this the better, because the time once was when the believer's life was hidden from him as it is from other men. The time was when he could see no mercy in the Scriptures—no love in their God—no joy in their redemption—nothing but bondage in their pure, celestial holiness. Scales were on his eyes, and all these things were concealed in darkness. But the set time to favour him arrived; the new creating energy was put forth; the scales fell off, and now he sees that the believer's life is truly a mysterious one—it is hid—it is hid with Christ—it is hid with Christ in God. There are substances which enable men to correspond with each other at a distance, without the danger of a third party discovering their meaning or design. All seems illegible or blank till some prearranged substance be applied, and then the correspondence and its contents stand legibly and visibly out. In the one case, they are hid; in the other, they may be seen and read of all men; and it is the same in regard to the life of those who are risen with Christ. That life is altogether mystical—it seems incomprehensible to men till they also be turned from darkness to light, and know the inner life as God our Saviour guides to it.

The history of many a soul bears witness to the truth

of this. The Pharisees of old were deeply versed in their Scriptures. Some have counted the sections, the sentences, the words, and the letters of their holy books. They could tell the middle section, the middle word, or even the middle letter of their Bible—but they did not know its meaning—they did not understand that the book on which they expended so much laborious trifling told of Jesus Christ, and contained the germ of everlasting life—a germ which waited only for the breath of the Spirit to shoot up and flourish in vigour. The Word of God, in short, was the perverted occasion of their ruin. And some learned men in modern times have indicated the same spirit. They have searched with critical minuteness into the letter. They have examined with laborious skill the evidences of religion. They have lived and died piling defence upon defence to uphold the Word of God against gainsayers. But when these very men came to tell their views of the contents of that book which they so laboriously defended, they displayed a darkness like that of childhood —they groped like the blind for the wall—regarding the real meaning of Scripture, the system according to which Jehovah redeems and restores man to happiness and Himself. Let any one who has felt the truth in its power read the Evidences of Revealed Religion by Dr Paley, and then turn to some of his sermons, and see how nobly a man may defend the outposts, while ignorant of what is contained in the citadel. Or men awakened to the vast concerns of eternity, and stirred up to make their calling and election sure, have struggled to comprehend the Word of God—the plan of salvation—the mystery hid from ages; but it baffled all their efforts. Human power could not force an entrance. Human penetration could not detect the meaning. The Spirit of God alone could furnish the key, or pour light into the mind. Truth was hid from the wise and the prudent, but revealed to the simple-minded, even to babes.

But this truth may be more vividly or practically ex-

plained in yet another way. When men are risen with Christ, and made alive unto God by the power of the Spirit, it is not uncommon for them to dedicate themselves to a missionary's life. Penetrated at once with the value of the soul and the wretchedness of the sinner, many, when just raised from death in sin, have resolved to devote themselves to the work of winning the heathen to Christ. Schwartz, Martyn, Macdonald, and a thousand more, have thus evinced their love of souls, and hastened away from father and mother, and all that men most fondly love, to hazard their lives for the name of Jesus. Now, oh! how hidden that life is from very many! The wise of this world have often awarded to such heroic, self-oblivious men only the character of enthusiasts, "apostates from the anvil and the loom" —their conduct is explained, as Festus explained the grand eloquence of the apostle, "Paul, thou art beside thyself." Their principles of action are utterly inconceivable to those who are not risen with Christ; although these principles are just those of ordinary Christians rendered more influential, or more concentrated and intense by the blessing of the Spirit on noble and generous minds. The soul's actual communing with God, and the reality of impressions made on man's immortal spirit by Him whose fiat gave it being, are deemed the extravagance of fanaticism by the wise of this world.

But farther: men have not merely become missionaries, they have become martyrs for the truth of God. Rather than abandon that truth—rather than consent to defile the soul by sin, or throw a single grain of incense to a heathen god—they have gone to the stake, and welcomed death with songs of praise. When Polycarp was about to be martyred at Smyrna, the Roman proconsul who condemned him hoped to shake his constancy by threats. "I have wild beasts," he said; "and will expose you to them unless you repent." "Call them," replied the martyr. "Our minds are not to be changed from the better to the worse; but it is a good

thing to be changed from evil to good." "I will tame your spirit by fire," said the other, "since you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent." "You threaten me with fire," answered Polycarp, "which burns for a moment, and will soon be extinguished; but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Do what you please." Saying this, and more, he was filled with confidence and joy, and grace shone in his countenance; so that he was far from being confounded by the menaces. On the contrary, the proconsul was visibly embarrassed; he sent, however, the herald to proclaim in the midst of the assembly, "Polycarp has professed himself a Christian." Upon this all the multitude, both of Gentiles and of Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, with insatiate rage shouted aloud, "This is the doctor of Asia, the father of Christians, the subverter of our gods, who hath taught many not to sacrifice nor to adore"—and the spiritual hero was accordingly destroyed. Now, how completely was that life hid from this world's men! To sacrifice all for an opinion—to die rather than commit a little sin—to endure excruciating torture rather than compromise one jot of God's pure truth—how visionary—how foolish—how hid! And yet, hidden as that life is, it is a real life—so real, that it bears man up amid woes which cannot be told. Like the Saviour himself, the man who is risen with Christ has meat to eat which the world knows not of; for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; he will show them his covenant." Truth in the soul is not a native, or a self-nursed thing: its origin is without and above us, even in the bosom of Him who is the Truth.

But let these illustrations of the hidden life suffice. From them we may easily understand in what respects the believer's life is hid.

It is hid as to its *origin*.—With that the world is unacquainted. It comes from God, for the believer is born from above. He is born of the Spirit, and derives

his spiritual being directly from Him whose distinctive name is Jehovah—or Existence.

The believer's life is hid as to its *nature*.—It is a divine principle, maintained by the divine Spirit—having no existence till that Spirit create it—and constantly dependent on that Spirit for continued being—constantly tending back to nothing, or to death, except as the Spirit keeps it alive.

And the believer's life is hid as to its *actings*.—Its joys are hid, its sorrows are hid; with these the world has no sympathy; nay, these the world cannot comprehend. Think, for example, of the joys of those who are risen with Christ. They are joy in the Holy Ghost. They are peace and joy in believing. They are joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Or think of the sorrows which such souls endure. They are sorrows for sin committed—for souls perishing—for God offended—for his Spirit grieved—his Son crucified afresh, and, oh! what can the world know of these? Are they not as completely hid as if they were buried deep in a grave, or wafted to some other world?

The life of one who is risen with Christ is hid as to any danger that can befal it. Men may kill the body; they cannot touch the soul. Inasmuch as that life is hid with Christ, and hid with Christ in God, it is beyond the reach of injury unless Omnipotence could grow weak. "In God we live," is the profound though simple declaration of the Word—and just as death has no power a second time over him who is THE LIFE, it has really no power over those who are risen with Christ, and are "one spirit with the Lord." Men have endeavoured by many a process to extinguish the life of the believer. The rack has tried it, and the blazing pile; but they have both been baffled. The depths of the ocean have tried it, and the wild beasts of the forest; but they could not prevail. Men have attempted to starve that life in the dungeon, to crush or to extinguish it in a thousand ways. But no. It is indestructible, unquenchable; for it is hid with Christ in God, and as

He who is the life cannot fail, this life can never die.—A delineation of it from its first feeble appearance, when spiritual death is abolished by the mighty power of God, till the moment when the soul is presented unto him without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, might serve at once as a beacon and a counsellor to many in the churches.

CHAPTER IV.

The Work of the Spirit.

"If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds,—if we imbue them with principles, with the just fear of God and our fellow-men, we engrave upon those tablets something that will brighten all eternity."—DANIEL WEBSTER.

"Come, Holy Spirit, come,
Let thy bright beams arise;
Dispel the sorrow from our minds,
The darkness from our eyes."

HART.

The Work of the Spirit.

Redemption unavailing without the Holy Spirit—Conviction of sin and misery —The knowledge of Christ—The will renewed—Christ embraced—Proofs that the Spirit's work is genuine—Dr. Payson—Dr. Gordon of Hull—Dr. John Owen—The religion of the poor—The coral reef—An analogy.

EXPERIENCE and revelation combine to teach us that even the Atonement and Redemption accomplished by the Son of God would be unavailing to the sons of men, were it not for the work of the Spirit in the soul. The wisdom of the Father might be displayed. New emanations of his glory might flow down to the wondering children of men; but while they wondered at the system of redemption, not one of them would profit by it, were not the work of the Son crowned and consummated by that of the Spirit. It is not enough to provide salvation, and say to sinners, Take it—it is designed for you. To complete the system of mercy, and lay a firm foundation for hope to the sinner, provision must be made to render man willing to be saved in God's way, or able to walk in that way after it has been opened. Redemption, as Jehovah provided it, has no beauty that man should by nature desire it, and hence that gracious provision which forms a component part of the gospel itself, by which we are "made willing in the day of his power"—"God working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." Christ could truly say, "It is finished," when he bowed his head and died;

but it was not merely because he had made an atonement for sin, or laid a foundation for the sinner's acceptance with his God: it was, moreover, because he had purchased the Spirit of promise, that he might be given to his redeemed as the earnest of the purchased possession, to teach them to say that Jesus is the Lord —the proof that at the set time heaven would be the home, and God himself the portion of the soul.

Now, the different stages of the Holy Spirit's work in the soul of man can easily be traced, according to the Word of God, although it may not be easy to follow them in order, in the case of every believer. *First*, When the truth of God is first brought impressively in contact with the soul, that is the result of the Spirit's power put forth to convince us of our sin and misery; to show us what our hearts have thought—what our lips have spoken—what our hands have done; and to prove to the conviction of conscience, by the rigorous power of the law, that there has been sin in it all. Religion is now no longer a thing of mere imitation. It is not held merely because our forefathers held it, or because our parents taught it. It begins to be a matter of deep personal earnestness. The conscience is stirred by the power of the Holy Ghost, and then, for the first time, man awakes from the delusions or the day-dreams of nature to the consciousness of actual sin, and to the need of an actual pardon, because he has to do with an actual God. "So greatly was my mind oppressed," wrote Rev. Charles Simeon, regarding such a condition, "with the weight of my iniquities, that I frequently looked upon the dogs with envy, wishing if it were possible that I could be blessed with their mortality, and they be cursed with my immortality."* Such were the effects of conviction of sin upon one of the most vivacious minds of modern times.

Secondly, Even in this state, the soul might wander and wail till it died the second death. Were man only convinced of sin, and not converted from it, he might

* Simeon's Life, second edition, p. 7.

continue till his dying hour like one struggling with an enemy whom he could not overthrow, or labouring under a burden from which he could not escape. Many have carried the arrow of conviction long rankling in the conscience, trying often, and in many ways of man's devising, to extract it, yet that arrow only lacerated the more—the wound festered—and the whole soul became diseased. But the Holy Spirit, who began the work, carries it on in the hearts of the people of God; and when the sinner has seen the sinfulness of sin, it may be speedily, or it may be after many self-righteous struggles, the Comforter pours light into the soul heretofore so dark. He enables the struggling heart to perceive the glories and the suitableness of the Saviour; that is, the Spirit becomes the glorifier of Jesus. He shows the soul the things that are Christ's—his righteousness—his all-sufficiency—his grace—his truth—his infinite trustworthiness—his willingness as well as power to save;—and thus the sinner that had toiled, but toiled in vain before, begins to cherish hope. It is when the soul is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, that the first ray of hope enters the mind. To know him is life eternal—to be ignorant of him is to be spiritually dead.

But a certain degree of enlightenment may be produced by the Holy Spirit, and yet salvation may not ensue. The Scriptures speak of some who were "once enlightened," and who "are partakers of the Holy Ghost," and yet they are classified with those whom it is impossible to renew unto repentance. But when the Holy Spirit has begun a saving work in the soul, the *third* stage is described as the renewing of the will. To salvation, upon the terms which the Gospel proposes, man is utterly averse; he is not willing that self should be set aside, and that we should be rescued from destruction solely and exclusively by the righteousness of another. The struggles between the sinner's egoism and Jehovah's sovereignty are too keen to admit of an easy surrender, and man is therefore absolutely unwil-

ling to be saved upon the terms of the gospel. He will go to self, in any of its delusive forms, and he will seek shelter from the wrath of the Holy One behind that shadow; but the peculiar, the unearthly, and humbling plan which the God of the gospel propounds, proud man cannot endure. "Ye *will not* come to me, that ye may have life." But the Spirit makes us willing. He gives efficacy to means, and point to appeals, and cogency to arguments. He works upon the heart, through the motives that are adapted to our rational and self-loving natures; and when the will is thus renewed, we begin to move in the narrow way. It costs a struggle to stoop so low as to obtain admission there; but He who first convinced us of sin humbles us because of it; He who humbles us makes us willing to be lifted up in the appointed way; and the sinner is thus prepared to advance in the way of God's commandments —to run and not be weary—to walk and not faint.

But even yet the grand conclusion has not been arrived at. All has been put in order, in a way that was sudden or protracted, according to the sovereign will of God; but all is not yet complete; the soul is not yet among the saved, for the consummation of the Spirit's work takes place only when union to Christ is actually effected. We have not the will: the Holy Spirit persuades. We have not the power: the Holy Spirit enables; and when the Saviour is thus embraced as the gospel offers him, in his freeness and his fulness, the kingdom of God is within us, or righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The heart is melted by the Spirit, and the image of God is then stamped again upon it. It is subdued, and the children of Zion rejoice in the protection of their King. The whole nature is renewed; it is in harmony with God's, and the melody of spiritual joy and spiritual health is heard in the dwellings of such converted ones.

We are far from saying that the different stages of this mighty revolution can be easily traced in all, or that the Holy Spirit always works in one unvarying way.

Like the wind, he moveth where he listeth. But the results are the same in all, whether the power of the Spirit was suddenly put forth, as in the case of Paul; or slowly, gradually, and amid many fitful struggles, as in the case of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Halyburton, and others. When the Spirit savingly works, so as to "convince of sin, and righteousness, and judgment," according to the promise, the termination ever is, to bring the sinner to Christ—to make the sinner one spirit with him, and teach him, from day to day, to sit at the Saviour's feet, exclaiming—"This is my rest; here I will stay, for I do like it well."

The genuineness of the Holy Spirit's work in any soul is proved in three ways:—

First, Christ becomes our all. Nothing that the sinner can do yields him any satisfaction apart from the Saviour. Like the dying Payson, that soul in which the Holy Spirit dwells, would cry, "I have not fought, but Christ has fought in me. I have not run, but Christ has carried me. I have not wrought, but Christ has wrought in me. Christ has done all." In such a case, the Spirit was assuredly at work. He was glorifying the Saviour in the soul of that departing saint; and it is ever the same in the heart where the Spirit of Christ abides.

Secondly, Holiness becomes our lifelong aim when the Spirit of Christ dwells in the soul. The Saviour becomes our model to be copied, as well as our Redeemer to be trusted; and it were no less opposed to all our convictions to say, that light is not connected with the sun, than to allege that the Spirit of God dwells in the heart which is not seeking to mortify all sin, and cherish all holiness. *Christlikeness* is the grand aim of every "temple of the Holy Ghost:" and the renewed soul is restless, like the ark on the heaving waters of the deluge, till "Holiness to the Lord" be inscribed upon it. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ sets that soul free from the law of sin and death. External pressure would never have succeeded. It must be

a power within the man that makes him holy; and that power is put forth by the Eternal Spirit. Where he is, there is liberty—liberty from the world's fear—from sin's dominion and love—from its condemnation and curse—from its bondage and debasement; and the emancipated soul, advancing under the guidance of the Spirit along the path that leads to glory, is presented at last unto God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Nothing but perfection can satisfy that soul, and to perfection it presses on as its goal.

A *third* proof that the Spirit of God is working for saving purposes in any soul is, that it makes God a party in every thing it does. All who can look back on their unrenewed state—these are, all who were converted after they had reached the years of maturity and thought—remember that God was then never present to the mind. Plans were laid and pleasures anticipated —sorrows were encountered—mercies were received —day-dreams were cherished—and God was never thought of amid them all. But when the Spirit of God came to dwell in the soul, all this was changed—God was seen to be a party in all our undertakings. His will behoved to be consulted, his glory to be aimed at, and his ends advanced. In the language of Dr Gordon of Hull, "our God became our companion," not our terror, or our bondage; our pleasure was found in nearness to him—our misery in his absence. We joyed in God whenever the love of him was shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

It were, perhaps, superfluous to refer to examples in the case of individual Christians regarding the work of the Spirit; for the history of every renewed soul is such an example. "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." But of all the cases that are known, few ever exemplified the work of the Spirit more than the life and the writings of John Owen. He is pre-eminently the preacher of the Spirit of Christ;

and he preaches that Spirit, not so much by announcing dogmas regarding him, as by transfusing the Spirit's power, and recognising the Spirit's work, through all his thinking, his language, and his actions. That was Owen's grand peculiarity—his characteristic at once among men and divines. He had learned, to no common extent, the holy secret of living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. He not merely supplies disquisitions; he exhibits life, a beating heart, and an active soul, in the service and love of the Spirit; and it is thus that the chief end of man is promoted—God is glorified, and man prepares to enjoy him for ever.

Or another illustration of the Holy Spirit's gracious power is found in the spiritual skill and attainments of many a poor and illiterate Christian. None teacheth like God; and who has not seen that truth exemplified in such cases as we mention? Some whose daily fare is a crust, who are perhaps the objects of charity, and whose home is but a hovel, are deeply versed in the things of the Spirit. The science of earth may be all a mystery to them, but that which connects with heaven and its glories is thoroughly understood. While others are contending, they are enjoying. While others are asking, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" they "come and see;" they walk up to the cross, and with an open hand appropriate the blessings that flow from it. While others are trying to force a way into the temple, they enter by Him who is the door; they delight themselves there in the abundance of peace; the joy of the Lord becomes their strength;—and all this is the result of the Holy Spirit's teaching, simply received, simply submitted to, and without hesitation obeyed. These are a willing people in the day of his power. They are therefore rich in faith, and heirs of the glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived.

It should be noticed, however, lest we should sadden some whom God has not made sad, that that result is arrived at often by slow degrees. The weakness of our

faith and the strength of our temptations repress the progress of the Spirit's work—it is oftener like the herb which the winter's cold forces back into the earth, than the tree which can defy the violence of the tempest —and hence the tardy growth of the soul in grace.

It is well known that there are portions of our world which have gradually risen up from the depths of the ocean, and now stud its surface with some of the most productive regions of the globe. By a peculiar process they grew, and increased, and were covered with richest vegetation, so that these distant isles of the sea have not merely become the dwellings of men, but send out their teeming produce to the remotest corners of the earth.

It is farther known that these islands, now so fertile and so green, are the work of myriads of little animals, toiling without a pause far down in the caves of the ocean. We say myriads of little animals, but might have said, such swarming multitudes that the stars of the midnight sky would form but a fraction of the number—the sands on the sea shore would be a better exponent. By imperceptible degrees, and through many generations, these little labourers of the deep ply their busy work, and by particle after particle build up those wondrous reefs, which often occasion disaster to the gallant ship, but in the end grow into islands—the abodes of busy men, eventually to become the scenes where the Saviour of the lost is to see anew of the travail of his soul.

Now, this work of the coral insect, and the slow, imperceptible additions which it makes to the fabric which it constructs, have often furnished an emblem of the Spirit's work in the recesses of man's soul. It is by very slow degrees that it grows at all. The kingdom of heaven does not come with observation. At one time, it may seem to increase; but then some tempest arises, and threatens to sweep the whole into ruin again. The wicked one catches it away, or temptations crush it, or the cares of the world choke it, so that it often comes

to nought; and even where converting grace has begun the work, it is like a spark in the ocean, ready at every breath to be extinguished, were not Omnipotence its defence and guarantee.

CHAPTER V.

Counterfeits of the Spirit's Work.

"This pretence of a single and extraordinary spirit is nothing else but the spirit of pride, error, and delusion, a snare to catch easy and credulous souls which are willing to die for a gay word and a distorted face; it is the pursuit of folly and giddy doctrine, and therefore useless to all purposes of religion, reason, and sober counsels. . . . . It imposes upon willing people after the same manner that oracles and the lying demons did of old time, abusing men . . . . because the men love to be abused."—JEREMY TAYLOR.

The Counterfeits of the Spirit's Work.

The world's counterfeits for grace—Adam Smith's estimate of David Hume—The religion of the amiable—Irvingism—The origin of its errors—Mormonism—Modern revivals as abused—Dreams—John Howe—John Fletcher of Madeley—Visions—Seeking comfort but not holiness—Other counterfeits—The genuine work of the Spirit.

The world has a counterfeit for all the graces of the divine life, and all the blessings of the glorious gospel. For zeal, it has enthusiasm; for holiness, it has monkery; for the mortification of sin, it has asceticism; for the righteousness of Christ, it has filthy rags; for the Spirit's work, it has moral suasion and outward decency; for the power and demonstration of the Holy One, it has the argument, the eloquence, and authority of man; for the unity of the Spirit, it has the unity of external power, or compulsion; for glory, honour, and immortality, it has posthumous fame, or the mimic honour which earth heaps upon its idols; and in regard to all these things, we are only saying that the world puts the shadow for the substance, the name for the reality, the cold and haggard skeleton for the divine and living form.

Let us consider some of the world's substitutes for the Spirit's work in his chosen temple—the heart of the believer.

We may here at once dismiss all such cases as those of Hume the historian, of whom Dr Adam Smith has said, that he "always considered him, both in his life-

time, and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human frailty would permit."* In such a case, the question instinctively arises, What is the standard of virtue? Is it God's, or is it man's? If it be the latter, then the eulogist and the eulogised are alike condemned. They are practically making God a liar at the very moment that they are boasting of their virtue, and we therefore at once dismiss all such cases from our view.

Nor need we do more than glance at that amiability of character which is often substituted for true religiousness, and is one of the most successful instruments of Satan in beguiling the soul to its ruin. Of that natural temperament, all men speak well. They love it and are attracted by it, and the partiality of friendship or the ardour of affection substitutes it for that grace which the Holy Spirit produces, and without which no man can be guided to glory. The most amiable of all the unconverted make God an exception to their love—they have affection for every thing but him. As the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is not in all their thoughts—so that, in truth, they rank in the same class with the historian Hume. However beautiful the exterior of the life may be, God is not feared, honoured, or loved, and the heart is therefore "an evil heart of unbelief."

Irvingism is the heresy of our day which has gathered into itself nearly all the corruptions of the vital doctrine concerning the Spirit's work. Animal excitement, mere fleshly feelings, the pride which swells in the bosom of heresiarchs, and not the lowliness which characterises the soul which has learned of the lowly One, are some of the substitutes supplied by this form of error for the work of the Spirit. Beginning in claims to inspiration, and utterances which professed to be the very voice of the living God addressing the dead churches, this system is now passing into Popery, by a transition that is

* See Smith's letters concerning Hume, prefixed to the History of England.

so natural as to be almost necessary, though we cannot tarry to trace the stages. But with the Word of God in our hand, it is not difficult to see that this system propounds another spirit than the Spirit of God. The holy, Christ-like bearing of the believer—the glorying in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh—which accompany the worshipping of God in the Spirit, are not visible here; and the gradual approach of the abettors of the system to "the mystery of iniquity," "that man of sin," proves at once its origin and its tendency. The origin of such errors may perhaps be traced to the latent but common fallacy that we must be conscious of the Spirit's work in the soul—that there must be impressions, impulses, fear, joy—of which we are sensible at the moment, as the fruit of the Spirit, but Dr Chalmers has presented the scriptural corrective to the fallacy in the words, "The Spirit's *work* is visible, but his *working* is not so. It is not of his *operation* that we are conscious, but of the *result* of the operation."

Others, who counterfeit the work of the Spirit in a kindred way, have directly claimed his inspiration. They have boasted that they never learned to read; and, while they poured forth their crude thoughts upon religious subjects, have argued that their ignorance of all common learning proved that they were taught of God. At different periods of the church's history, impostors have thus arisen to counterfeit or caricature the grand truths of revelation. One has pretended that he was the Son of God, and another has declared that he was the Holy Spirit. Mormonism has ventured upon similar impiety in our own day; and amid all our boasted light and progress, hundreds of thousands have made that impiety their own. It is thus that contempt has been heaped by the machinations of Satan on the grandest doctrines of the faith; and in the same spirit the truth of God regarding the Spirit's work in the believer's heart has been so imitated as to be disfigured. The unstable have been rendered more unstable still, and the ungodly fortified in their hostility to the truth.

Amid modern revivals, the work of the Spirit in the soul has often been painfully obscured. The most sober believer will most cordially rejoice over these "harvests of the ministry," as often bringing large accessions of glory to the Saviour—glory in the conviction of many; and glory in the conversion of not a few. It may be true that a revival is a satire on the Christian church; but truth otherwise unwelcome or unheeded may be taught in satires, and the believer will rejoice if sinners be quickened from death in sin by any means that are in accordance with the Word of God. But still there have been scenes on such occasions, amid which man tried to do the work of the Spirit by means which sank the sinner further and deeper into error. Animal excitement has taken the place of the Spirit's subduing and sanctifying power. Exhausted or stimulated nature has been substituted for renewing grace; and the effect has been, that the sleep of spiritual death has become deeper than ever in the souls of such men. They did not enter by the strait gate upon the narrow way, and then they could only wander from the path that leads to glory. Animal fervour is not conviction of sin. Fleshly excitement does not imply a change of heart; and though the soul may be deeply stirred, and the very body wasted and worn, when the Spirit of God guides the sinner as if into the presence of the Judge, still the radical change which that Spirit produces must manifest itself in other ways than excitement and trouble, or all will be found to have been but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Dreams have often been viewed by men of sanguine mind as if they had achieved what the Scriptures assign to the agency of the Word and the Spirit of God. Impressions were made, or sights were seen, or voices were heard, addressing the dreamer by name; and these have been regarded as deciding the character of the sinner, by turning him from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Now, there is enough in Scripture upon this subject to warn us not to limit the

Holy One here. Joseph's dream, and Elihu's words, as well as those of others, tell that God may get access to the mind of man while the body is fast locked in sleep. "God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." But this all conceded, it is needful to watch with utmost care, lest impressions made on the fancy in a dream be substituted for the change, or rather the radical revolution wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, when old things pass away. A voice may have been heard, but has the soul come in consequence of that to Christ? Is it made one Spirit with the Lord? If not, the voice was that of a deceiver. A light may have been seen—but did it show us more clearly the preciousness of the Saviour?—Did we walk more steadfastly in the way that leads to Zion? If not, the light was one that led astray—it could not come from God unless it led us to him. To sink to sleep in an unconverted state, and to awake with an impression, however deep, that a dream, a voice, a sight, has changed the whole tenor of our being, is to suppose that a dream or a vision can do the work of the Spirit; and wherever that opinion is held, that soul has still to be converted; if it be not converted, it will yet lie down in sorrow. Melting views of Christ such as some have gloried in, whether enjoyed in a sleeping or a waking dream, are only the results of a vivid or a disordered fancy, unless they tend to make the soul like Christ. All these things must be tested by their fruits. The Spirit alone can make us holy; and wherever that result is not achieved, wherever Christ is not both believed and imitated, the father of lies, and not the Father of lights, is at work in the soul.

There have been cases, however, in which impressions at once solemn and lasting have been made by means of dreams. John Howe, one of the most grave and intellectual men of a grave and intellectual age, was

so impressed by a dream, that its effects went with him into the world of spirits. The devout John Fletcher of Madeley had a dream regarding the judgment, which solemnized him through life. He was "obliged to acknowledge the hand of God in it; for it roused him from his vanity," and set the realities of eternity vividly before him. "The agitation of his mind and body awoke him, and the mere recollection of it made him often tremble." "O how happy I felt," he records, "on awaking, to find that I was still in the land of mercy and the day of salvation!" "O my God," he cried, "grant that my dream may continually influence my sentiments and my conduct! May it prove a powerful stimulus to excite me to prepare continually for the coming of my great Master!" The result was, that Fletcher was awakened from an unconverted state, and "never rested till he found peace with God by a living faith in his truth and promises."

Others have been as profoundly impressed in visions. It is recorded of one,* that as he walked in his garden for sacred meditation, he was "suddenly arrested and overcome with a most affecting vision of his Saviour, as suspended on the cross, and bearing his very sins. He was so lost in the view, that he knew not where he was, overwhelmed with unutterable joy, and the most affecting gratitude for the discharge of the immense debt which he owed to the justice of a holy God." Now, without venturing to limit the Holy One, or speaking as if the Spirit may not by such means impress, solemnize, convert, or edify the soul, we would yet record the need of caution in regard to all such scenes. They are so closely allied to mere imagination, and *may* be so entirely the result of a heated fancy or certain bodily conditions, that the law and the testimony, the final touchstone of all that claims to be spiritual, should be kept in close contact with them. What are their fruits? Do they bring the soul to Christ? Is the sinner's will more than ever merged in God's? Is the written Word

* See "Thoughts on Religious Experience." By Archibald Alexander, D.D.

more than ever prized, prayed over, lived upon? Then these things tend heavenward, and *may* be to the soul, what the transfiguration on the mount was to the three disciples, or what the well in the desert was to Hagar and her outcast boy.

To only one other counterfeit would we here refer. Many, in all the churches, desire intensely the Spirit's comfort, but not the Spirit's holiness; and that is ever a spurious spiritualism. Even Jehovah has not undertaken to make man happy except by making him holy again; and to seek felicity without seeking to be made pure, is, in truth, just seeking to see while yet we are blind, or to be happy while yet we are wretched. The Spirit of God is the Comforter; but it is because he is also the Spirit of truth. He comforts and upholds by leading the soul into all truth; and till that be done, he that seeks comfort alone is seeking the living among the dead.

We need not dwell now on the common counterfeit of the Spirit's work, seen in the case of those who, for a time, are under serious impressions—who perhaps weep and mourn in their complaint for a season—but afterwards draw back, and become more the children of wrath than before. Neither need we allude to the case of those who took up their position for a time as members in the church of Christ, who walked with external consistency, and perhaps were marked for their apparent devotion, but were unmasked at last, as enemies of the cross of Christ—as wells without water—clouds without rain—withered branches stuck into the earth, but without root, and therefore without nourishment or fruit. These are melancholy cases, and the cause of deepest sorrow to those who watch for souls. They lie like wrecks upon a rocky coast after a storm; and may well warn all to make sure that the Spirit of God has taught us to say that Jesus is the Lord. Is the heart the temple of the Holy Ghost? Are we one spirit with the Lord? Does he dwell in us, and walk in us, at once the Spirit of holiness and the Spirit

of adoption? Then our name is in the Lamb's book of life, and what men call death will be to us but the birth-moment of our better being.

It was beautifully said of man, while alone in Eden, that, created for thought, for converse, for affection—his thought sought another to reflect itself—his word melted sadly away into air, or only awoke a mocking echo—his affection knew not on what to fasten, and, falling back upon himself, threatened to desolate his soul with egotism.* The same might be said of man anterior to the time when the Spirit of God takes possession of his soul. His thoughts wander in quest of something to gratify, but they wander on the mountains of vanity. His affection seeks some worthy object, but clings to a shadow, or blindly puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—and never till the New Creator bring order out of that confusion, as Eve was given to Adam in his loneliness, are the wants of the soul responded to, or its happiness so much as begun.

* La Femme, par Adolphe Monod, p 9.

CHAPTER VI.

The Soul awakened to Self-knowledge.

"Self-confiding wretch! I thought
I could serve Thee as I ought;
Win thee, and deserve to feel
All the love thou canst reveal!
Trusting self, a bruised reed,
Is to be deceived indeed.
Save me from this harm and loss,
Lest my gold turn all to dross!"

MADAME GUYON.

The Soul Awakened to Self-knowledge.

Formalism—Conscience awakened—The means—Compromises attempted—The case of Sir Richard Hill—Its lessons—The great deep of man's heart fathomed—The liberty of the sons of God—How to enjoy it—The first glimpse of the gospel.

It is painfully plain that many have no religion but that of their forefathers. There is no feeling of sin, and no regarding of God as a being with whom they have personally to do. They mingle among those who praise him, but their hearts do not praise; they join with those who pray, but God is not in their thoughts even then. They read or hear his Word, but it is not God, it is the creature, that is thought of—the creature that is dealt with; and in the case of not a few, all passes away like a tale that has been told, or like the early dew.

At length, however, in some such cases, the period arrives when the soul is roused by the sovereign Spirit from its deep delusions. It is then discovered that the soul has relations with God and eternity; and that discovery hushes the cry of "Peace, peace." "What must I do to be saved?"—"Who shall show us any good?"—"O wretched man, who shall deliver me?"—is the cry which takes its place. Let us contemplate a soul thus awakening to the consciousness of the three great realities, God, Eternity, and Salvation.

Conscience, heretofore dormant and inactive as regards God, begins to speak loudly on his behalf. "The

sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Sentences like these from the Word of God begin to agitate the soul. It is not an enemy *without*, it is a judge, a part of ourselves, *within*, that arraigns; and, when it is so arraigned, the soul often bends to the earth oppressed. Heedless, however, of the soul's distress, conscience presses its claims—it speaks more and more plainly for God. At one time, the Word is the instrument which conscience, quickened by the Spirit, wields; and then its searching requirements sink the soul into despair. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul," becomes one of the most pungent and penetrating portions of God's testimony to sinners, and it is sometimes felt as if God were rending the soul by the lightning of that law. At another time, it is a providential dispensation—a death, disease, trials, losses, which the conscience employs. We have known one converted by means of blindness, and that after he had meditated suicide under the calamity. In the providence and by the grace of God, that sore bereavement, under which the sufferer struggled at first like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, became the means of guiding him to the Saviour. We have known another brought to God by the blessing of his Spirit on the entire loss of his hearing. Shut out from the world, amid whose frivolities he had formerly lived, and into whose vortex he had passionately plunged, Major ——— could find no alternative but to turn at last to his God. The feeling of isolation and loneliness was more than he could bear; and, by the grace of God, he found relief where the sinner might

ever find it,—in Him who giveth sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead.

It is true, that in such cases there is often intense reluctance to adopt the will of God; and it is here that the enmity of the carnal mind most signally appears. As long as man knew not his own heart, or felt not his alienation from his God, that enmity was not perceived; but when God proved that he was God,—when he taught the creature that he was a creature,—when Omnipotence and the strong man armed come into collision, the inborn antagonism in man's will to the will of the Supreme became painfully manifest. The nearer that God came, the wayward creature became the more wayward; and though that opposition was like a fire in the bones, which no human power could quench, that only increased the keenness of the contention. The more that God, and holiness, and eternity, were pressed upon man, the more were they disliked; so that the soul's discovery of its own condition has not seldom been the signal for raising higher and higher the standard of revolt. Pharaoh-like, ten plagues have only tended more and more to harden it, and in this dim and perilous transition, even He who is love is often regarded as the enemy of man.

At last, however, perhaps a compromise was attempted. When the soul discovered that there was only labour and sorrow in opposing God, some middle way between rebellion and a surrender was sought. The sins of the hand were modified or abandoned, that the sins of the heart might be retained and enjoyed. Reformation was substituted for the regeneration which God demands. The creature's own righteousness was patched into a robe, that the humbling necessity of putting on the Redeemer's might be escaped. Vows and resolutions of amendment were adopted, that self might have the honour of doing what only the Spirit of all grace can accomplish. But even this is not enough, and some have risen to a sublimer effort still. "I read the most awakening discourses," is the record of one; "I

went to hear the most arousing preachers; and endeavoured to work on my own mind by imagining the awful realities of the judgment and the torments of the damned. I strove to draw the covering from the pit, that I might behold the lake of fire and hear the wailings of the lost. But the more I sought these awful feelings of conviction, the farther they seemed to fly from me. My heart seemed to grow harder every day."

Nor need we wonder that it did so. In what can such self-righteous efforts end but greater hardness of heart? When that labouring sinner awoke to self-knowledge, had he fled at once to the stronghold of the gospel, he would at once have found all that his soul required. But he would not adopt the gospel, and he therefore laboured in the fire. He spent his strength for nought. He attempted to do the work both of the Saviour and of the Spirit; and who will marvel though bitterness of soul was the result? It was only when he came in simple faith to Him who benignantly says, "Come unto me," that the sinner found rest to his weary soul.

The case of Sir Richard Hill is full of instruction here. When the Spirit of God awoke him to self-consciousness, he strove to stifle the convictions of his soul, and writes thus regarding his condition while at Oxford and in foreign parts:—"The more I endeavoured to put from me the thoughts of my soul, by drinking deeper draughts of iniquity, the more strongly did the insulted Spirit plead with me, and often in the very act of sin would so embitter my carnal gratifications, and strike me with such deep remorse, that (oh! horrid to think!) I have even been ready to murmur, because God would not let me alone, nor suffer me to sin with the same relentless satisfaction which I observed in my companions." Now, this is a startling but a truthful portrait. The superficial views of sin on the one hand, and of holiness on the other, which satisfy many souls, may prevent such fearful struggles; but wherever the sinner becomes thoroughly earnest, and

would fathom the depths, or rise to the heights of spiritual things, Satan, the world, and the evil heart of unbelief, stir up a similar struggle in the inner man.

When men are thus convinced, then, of their true condition—when they have discovered that sin has caused a disruption between God and the soul, which nothing can heal but redemption—it is instructive to notice how the character of man appears precisely as the deepest sayings of the Scriptures describe. Man's inability to do what is good in the sight of God—his recoil from God's sovereignty, from his holiness, and his wondrous way of grace—all become apparent; and new evidence is furnished that God is in the Scriptures of a truth. The spasmodic prayer of such troubled souls, followed perhaps by despair and self-abandonment, exhibits the antagonism that exists between God's redemption and the heart of man, until the Spirit of God subdue it. The kind of hope sometimes founded on the soul's very agonies lets us see farther still into the mind; but most of all is it instructive to notice, how some of these cases end in just riveting more tightly the fetters of sin. The sinner has been brought to the knowledge of sin, but not of the Saviour. He has felt sorrow upon sorrow, but it was that of the world. It once seemed the dawn of spiritual day in that bosom, but the darkness of night has settled on it as before. It once appeared to be not far from the kingdom of God, but it wandered away from the sacred precincts again—it never became *a Christian;* or, to say every thing in one, Christ was not received and rested on, and the result was only wo.

It is more pleasant, however, to contemplate this self-knowledge as urging the sinner towards the cross and the Crucified One. No doubt, that sinner may relapse; but may we not hope that more frequently he passes from death to life—from the vassalage of sin to the glorious liberty of the sons of God? It is difficult, indeed, to determine how early grace may be planted in the struggling bosom; and we may be dishonouring the

Spirit, and despising the day of small things, by denying that a saving work has been wrought in many such souls, even before the eye of man can detect it. The very feebleness and paralysis occasioned by sin, are akin to that state of mind of which the Scriptures speak, where they tell of him that has no might. Nay, the very time at which some sit in sackcloth, and self-condemned, as if the day of grace were gone, may be the time when the Spirit of grace is preparing to triumph over every hindrance in the soul. As the death of the seed gives occasion to the growth of the plant, the death of man's baseless hopes may bring him, a self-condemned sinner, to the Saviour. "I have rejected God so long," exclaimed a struggling sinner, "that now God has rejected me, as he did Saul! My day of grace is past, irrecoverably past, and I have for ever shut myself out from all the promises." Yet that very soul became eminent for godly zeal in the cause of Christ. Deliverance came when the sinner ceased to challenge or deny the truth of his God, and believed that the Redeemer was in earnest when he said in so much mercy,—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And to the soul thus struggling, and just not despairing, the first glimpse of the gospel is sometimes transporting. The mere possibility of salvation is gladdening; it has brought foretastes of the joy which the ransomed feel when they cast their crowns at the feet of Him who gave them, and ascribe the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever to Him. There may be lights and shadows in that life; faith may fade away into weakness, and then swell into vigour again. Like the harp stirred by the breeze, now swelling into deep, full tones, and then sinking into gentlest whispers,—like the sea, now tost and tempestuous, and anon calm without a wave, religion in the soul may pass through frequent changes. But the first discovery of this simple truth, "Christ is able to save *even me*," is the very balm that is in Gilead to the wounded conscience. Strange, that

so simple a discovery, lying, one would think, on the surface of the Bible, never yet was savingly made till the Spirit of God became the light of the soul! Fable tells us that the statue of Memnon became vocal when touched by the rays of the rising sun, and the truth as it is in Jesus turns the fable into fact. The rising of the Sun of Righteousness on the soul causes it to sing in the house of its pilgrimage.

CHAPTER VII.

The Soul in Earnest, but not Converted.

"Why halt'st thou, deluded heart?
Why waverest longer in thy choice?
Is it so hard to choose the part
Offered by Heaven's entreating voice?
Oh, look with clearer eyes again,
Nor strive to enter in in vain.
Press on."—LEBE.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."—LUKE xiii. 24.

The Soul in Earnest, but not Converted.

Freeness of the gospel offer—Yet many do not close with it—The gospel addressed to *Sinners*—Men think it is addressed to believers—To penitents—An illustration—Other hinderances—The case of Simon Magus.

In tracing the history of a soul in its transition from darkness to light, there is one stage at which we would linger for a little, as exhibiting by contrast the difference between the religion of God and that of man.

Nothing can exceed the freeness with which the gospel beckons the sinner to the Saviour. In every form of anxious encouragement which could be devised, the invitations are conveyed. "Whosoever will"—"My voice is to the sons of man"—"All the ends of the earth"—"All that labour and are heavy laden"—these are some of the phrases by which the weary are invited to rest, the burdened to relief, and the sinful to pardon.

Yet free and inviting as that language is, many are not encouraged. On the contrary, they continue dejected and downcast. The three days' blindness of Paul after his marvellous vision, is the emblem of such souls—they grope like the blind for the wall. And why? Since the God of all grace has made the path so plain, and invited "whosoever will" to come, and to come *as sinners*, how does it happen that so many sinners are unsoothed and unhappy still? Because they interpose difficulties where the only wise God has removed them; they conjure up obstructions where he

has made the path so plain, that "the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err."

Premising that all the fault of the sinner's delay is in the sinner himself, we here observe, that the root of that hesitation is found in the fact, that man does not attend to the character of those to whom the invitations of the gospel are addressed. They are the ungodly whom Christ came to save—the lost whom Christ came to seek—the sinful whom he came to call to repentance—the diseased whom he beckons to a physician—in a word, "sinners, even the chief," are earnestly invited to the Saviour of the lost. In what character, then, are we to come to the Redeemer? It is simply and only *as sinners*. We are not to ask the question, Am I a penitent? or have I faith? We are to go *as sinners;* and only when we do so are we welcoming the gospel invitation, or entering on the gospel's peace. Let the soul be haunted by the thought that it must in some way reform, or repent, or believe, *before coming*, and it will die in its sins; for it is in the act of coming that these results are wrought in the soul. A pardon is freely offered to me as a sinner of mankind. Do I freely take it as it is offered? Then I live for ever. Do I pause and hesitate and delay? Then I am devising another gospel than that of God. I am vexing myself in vain; I am actually waiving away what the Son of God came from heaven to earth to present, and the end of that can only be protracted misery, or the second death.

Further, a still more subtle form of error is to conclude that a certain amount of feeling, of sorrow, or of tears, must interpose between my hearing the offer and accepting of it, and it is here that many prolong their spiritual bondage. This is the enchanted ground on which self-righteousness in its finest form is very frequently indulged, although the price of that indulgence be misery. Instead of surrendering themselves at once to the Redeemer, and at once rejoicing in his peace, men would weep, and lament, and delay, forgetting that they may die while they are so employed, and that

a double death in one. Even such men as Richard Baxter have been misled by this form of error. His early conviction was, that could he lament enough for his sins, or weep enough over them and the ruin of his soul, then he could cherish hope; but he lived to see that that was just waiting till he could come with a price in his hand—a price less gross, perhaps, but not less real, than the self-inflicted torture of Popish flagellants, or the agony which makes our flesh to creep endured by the Hindoo devotee. It is taking pardon as offered by God *to sinners*, that frees the soul from all these fetters; and every other course only rivets them more and more.

Let it be supposed that some new island were discovered in the vast Pacific Ocean, where the message of mercy had never been heard before. One arrives, however to proclaim it; he proclaims it; and how? Is it by teaching those savage men that they must *humble themselves* first, that they must *reform themselves* first, that they must *believe of themselves* first, and then come to Christ? Yes, if that messenger did not understand his message, he would thus substitute his own gospel for God's—he would teach men to fit themselves for being saved. But if the Spirit who revealed the gospel of free grace to sinners had taught him to understand it, his message would be this:—Come as sinners to the Saviour of sinners, and he will teach humility; come as lost to the Redeemer, and he will reform—he will "make all things new;" come as ungodly to Him who "in due time died for the ungodly," and he will sanctify through the washing of water by the Word. It is thus that an able minister of the New Testament would proceed, and the same course should be pursued in our island as in that distant isle of the sea. Till that be done, self-salvation is still the idol of the sinner. Flesh is still our arm; man does not yet adopt the simple gospel. The first of our efforts should be to bring him to Christ, and the last should be to make the sinner like him, by the power of the Spirit of grace.

But another obstacle which often prevents the earnest soul from coming to the Saviour, is the feeling that all it does is sin—that its very prayers are wickedness—and that, when the hands of the sinner are held out, the Lord refuses to regard the suppliant. Many have been perplexed and downcast on this account, and long delays have ensued before the soul could enjoy the peace which is so freely provided in the gospel. Now, "to the law and the testimony" for a solution of this difficulty. There stood before the apostles, at a certain period in their "Acts," a professing follower of Christ—but he proved by his conduct that he was only a professor—and the apostle who dealt with him said, "I perceive . . . . that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." How, then, was this sinner directed to proceed? Was he told to despair? to perish in his sins, as one who was utterly cast off? Or was he taught to make himself a penitent before he appealed to God? On the contrary, in the bond of iniquity as he was, the apostle directed him instantly to pray. His sin did not set him free from the incumbent duty to call upon his God. To that Simon Magus was accordingly directed; and the same should be done in every case. The gospel message is addressed to man as a sinner; and if from his heart he cry, as the apostle directed this sinner to do, the Hearer and Answerer of prayer may hear, pity, and forgive, in his own appointed way.

But, in truth, this class of objections may all be traced to a latent self-righteousness. They proceed on the tacit assumption, that if we were holier and better we could come, but, sinners as we are, we cannot venture into the presence of the Holy One. Now, the veil is surely transparent here. The language obviously means,—If I were more holy, I could come and cherish hope, because of my holiness; but I cannot hope in Christ alone. If I were more penitent, or more fervent, or more prostrate in the dust, God might welcome me then—I might be fit for salvation, or I might deserve it; but defiled, guilty, condemned—in that condition, I

cannot, need not come. Now, that, we repeat, is not humility—it is pride. It is not the gospel welcomed as addressed to sinners, but the gospel viewed as addressed to the humble, the penitent, or the deserving. It is not salvation by the righteousness of another—it is salvation sought by our own; and that is obviously to pervert, nay, to reverse, the gospel of the grace of God. It is just putting self in the place of the Redeemer; at the very least, it is substituting the Spirit's progressive work in us for the Saviour's perfect work for us; and, wherever that is done, the soul may well pine away, for it is declining the children's bread and putting away the children's heritage. To make our reception of the Saviour depend on the state of our feelings or our humility, our fervent prayers, or aught that is our own, is not merely irreligious, but unreasonable. It is putting the effect before the cause, or redemption before the Redeemer. The sinner's first duty is to receive and rest upon him; and, till that be done, the soul is not safe. Pungent sorrow, amounting to remorse, may be felt; but it is a sorrow that worketh death, till we come to the Man of Sorrows for rest to the soul. It is Christ received, Christ rested on, that teaches godly sorrow, and then guides to everlasting joy. Only then are we in contact with Him who is the life of our souls; only then are our inward necessities met, and an energy or impetus imparted to man which carries him forward to the place of eternal repose.

It is not to be denied, that there must be some degree of conviction of sin ere any one will think of coming to the Saviour. We must feel that we are sick, ere the physician be sought; that we are condemned, ere acquittal be earnestly desired. But without lingering to settle the degree of that, the call, the command of God *to sinners* to believe is our rule, and that should be instantly obeyed.*

In accordance with this, it is not too much to say, that no power but that of Christ crucified can really

* Owen's Works—Goold's Edit. vol v., pp. 29, 99, 119. See also chap. i.

humble the heart of man. You may strip him bare of every earthly possession; you may leave him like a leafless trunk, or a dismantled wreck; you may bereave him of all that is held dear. Affection may weep over him; authority may command; agony may lacerate; poverty may press him to the dust. To all these the law of God may add its terrors; and the dread of an undone eternity, of a lost soul, or a forfeited heaven, may complete the climax of wo: but all will not suffice to humble man. To Christ he must come at last to learn to be meek and lowly. Till then, pride, however disguised, is ruling in his heart; and never, never till the love of Christ expels them, do the enmity and antagonism of the carnal mind against God yield up the soul to the control and the guidance of grace. Christ's sacrifice for sin, his finished work, and all the glory which encircles it, are obscured or blotted out, if it be our feelings or our prayers that constitute the grounds of our hope, or the elements of our peace; for "that disposition which would render us willing to endure any thing as part of the terms tendered to God in exchange for what he alone can give, whatever vehemence of desire it may be supposed to exhibit, is radically self-righteous, self-confident, and self-esteeming."*

To only one other obstruction do we now advert. Many are prevented from closing at once with the gospel's offer, or accepting of its invitation, because their minds are startled by some of the abstruse and difficult points of religion. We pass by the difficulties occasioned by the decrees of God, and similar topics, which are too wonderful for many, to advert only to the words, "No man cometh unto me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." At the reading of these, we have known not a few perplexed, unsettled, and unhappy. If God must draw, then I have only to wait in silent passiveness till he be pleased to move, is the

* Difficulties of an Anxious Inquirer. By Dr T. C. Henry. Letter IV. See also a Tract, "Behold the Lamb!" from a Letter by Rev. John Macdonald, as containing the simplest solution of these difficulties which we know.

language of the heart; and then there follow upon that, strange imaginings about some unwonted, sudden, or semi-miraculous means of drawing—at least, it is felt that till that difficulty be adjusted, the soul cannot be at peace. It pines away in sorrow, disconsolate and wretched.

How perverse and self-ruinous is this! Salvation is not made to depend on our power of solving difficulties, or of making that plain which is abstruse. It depends only on our coming to Christ, as the God of mercy has invited us. He has not perilled our eternal life on our being able to fathom the grand mystery of election, or to untie the metaphysical knot regarding the Spirit's work upon the one hand, and man's upon the other, in the matter of salvation; but he has, in holy sovereignty, perilled it on our looking unto Jesus; and to that he is drawing us by a thousand means. His Spirit, his Word, his providence, his servants, his church, his day, his judgments, his mercies—all point to the same central object; and if, amid all these, we refuse to follow till we can solve some abstruse and speculative truths—that is, till we rise from the region of a creature to that of the Creator—O, what can be plainer than that, if we perish at last, we fall by our own hand, and must be condemned even by our own conscience! "Come unto me,"—nay, merely "Look unto me,"—is the divine address to the sons of men; and, listened to *by sinners as such*, it becomes, through the Spirit's blessing, the appointed dissolvent of a thousand difficulties—it may dissipate ten thousand errors. Judging from the practices of some, we might conclude that religion is all one fathomless mystery, or one aggregate of perplexities. But when the soul is really in earnest, and really humbled—when it is taught by the Holy Spirit to apply truth to the individual heart and life—then, "doing the will of God, we know that the doctrine is of him." "The Word of God doeth good to them who walk uprightly." Perplexities are all cleared away, and the soul delights itself in the abundance of peace. It is sit-

ting at the feet of Christ that makes us wise unto salvation;—and he was a wise counsellor who said, "Endeavour, as it were, to anticipate the Spirit, not in *working*, for that would be to disregard him, but in the use of means, *and you will then find that he has anticipated you.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

The Convert.

"The new-born child of gospel grace,
Like some fair tree when summer's nigh,
Beneath Emmanuel's shining face
Lifts up his blooming branch on high.

No fears he feels, he sees no foes,
No conflict yet his soul employs;
Nor has he learnt to whom he owes
The strength and peace his soul enjoys.

But sin soon darts its cruel sting,
And comforts sink from day to day;
What seemed his own, a well-fed spring,
Proves but a brook that glides away."

COWPER.

The Convert.—Part First.

Conversion—Its diversities—Accounts of Dr. Edwards—The Conversion of Calvin—John Owen—A soldier's conversion—Halyburton—Should the date of our conversion be known?

It is the uniform testimony of the Teacher sent from God, that we must either be converted or never enter heaven. Some portions of the church may obscure or pervert that truth; others may erase or deny it, and many may give it only a formal recognition; but all who take their religion straightway and simply from the Word of God are convinced, that according to the teaching of Christ there are just as many Christians on earth as there are converted souls. Let us contemplate a Convert, then, in the various lights in which the Scriptures and experience present him to us.

The work of conversion is diverse in its manifestations beyond the power of computation. In the revivals, for example, which took place in New England under the ministry of Dr Jonathan Edwards, the diversities of spiritual experience which were manifested among the truly converted are so described as scarcely to admit of being classified. "Some were carried on with abundant hope from the commencement." "Some," Dr Edwards writes, in his account of these proceedings, "have had ten times less trouble than others, in whom the work yet appears the same in its issue." "The

awful apprehensions which persons have had of their misery," he proceeds, "have for the most part been increasing the nearer they approached to deliverance. Sometimes they think themselves wholly senseless, and fear that the Spirit of God has left them." "Many times persons under great awakenings were concerned because they thought they were not awakened, but miserably hard-hearted, senseless, sottish creatures still, and sleeping on the brink of hell." "Persons are sometimes brought to the borders of despair, and it looks as black as midnight to them, a little before the day dawns on their souls. The depravity of the heart has discovered itself in various exercises in the time of legal convictions. Sometimes it appears as in a great struggle, like something roused by an enemy. Many, in such circumstances, have felt a great spirit of envy towards the godly, especially towards those who have been recently converted. As they are gradually more and more convinced of the corruption and wickedness of their hearts, they seem to themselves to grow worse and worse, harder and blinder, and more desperately wicked, instead of growing better." "When awakenings first begin, men's consciences are commonly more exercised about their outward vicious courses, but afterwards are much more burdened with heart-sins, the dreadful corruption of their nature, their enmity against God, the pride of their hearts, their unbelief, their rejection of Christ, the stubbornness of their will, and the like." "Very often they set themselves, under first awakenings, to walk more strictly, confess their sins, and perform many religious duties, with a secret hope of appeasing God's anger." "When they reflect on the wicked working of their hearts against God, they have more distressing apprehensions of his anger, and have great fear that God will never show mercy to them, or perhaps that they have committed the unpardonable sin."

Such are some of the various states of mind through which sinners pass at conversion, as depicted by this

great master of analysis. The eye either gazes into vacancy, or if it see the light, it is lurid, and threatens to consume rather than illumine. Men's discovery of their ignorance of themselves, and their struggles to attain what they feel they need—their self-righteous attempts to whitewash the sepulchre, or cover over its corruption—their various devices, by means of tears, confession of sin, legal penitence and suffering, unconsciously employed instead of the great atonement—all these, and countless other *substitutes for Christ*, are described by Edwards as none could have done who had not, like him, a wide and a painful experience of the ingenious perversity of man in missing the narrow way, and stumbling onward in the path which goes down to the chambers of death. The heart's Popery is singularly conspicuous in all these devices. The blindness of the natural man is proclaimed by them, as if described in light on the blue sky above us.

But when conversion actually takes place, the states of the soul are as various as in the previous stages. The law of God, in all its strict unbending holiness, is the grand ultimate instrument of conversion; for wherever the soul's anxiety began, it is always guided at last to the standard which God has set up. Not that there is any necessity that the soul should linger in the neighbourhood of Sinai, even for an hour. There have been ministers of Christ who insisted that men should do so—that no one can come to Christ without passing through the ordeal of many trials, and fears, and self-condemnings. It may, *in fact*, be the case that many do pass through that process; and it is certain that some who have trembled for a time on the verge of despair, and been moved in soul by appeals more solemn than thunder heard at midnight, have been afterwards greatly honoured by God in the work of winning souls to him, before whom they once feared and quaked. But still the divine injunction or invitation to every sinner is, "Come"—come, not after a certain preparatory discipline, but now; and to that injunction the earnest soul should

look in all simplicity, when beginning to make its calling and election sure.

Instead, however, of dwelling upon any general description, let us submit some examples of conversion, as embodying the truth, and so helping the anxious sinner on his way.

The first that we select is the case of the Reformer, Calvin. Though his conversion was effected without a very protracted struggle, yet from his own information, we know that it was not accomplished without stirrings in the conscience and a keen recoil in the heart. Wedded as his strong mind had been to Popish superstition, habituated to offer his profoundest veneration to relics, and to grovel in the other debasing corruptions of Rome, it was not easy for him to snap asunder the influence which these things exercised over such a spirit as his. He speaks of his conversion indeed as sudden —that is, the gospel became clear to his mind at a certain point in his struggles; but it is obvious that his soul had been deeply stirred prior to that event. Amid his agitations, he tried to soothe his earnest spirit by the use of all the appointed ceremonies, and to daub the tottering wall with man's untempered mortar. But conscience, he says, refused to be appeased by such appliances. Whenever "he descended into himself, or raised his heart to God, such extreme horror surprised him, that neither Popish purifications nor satisfactions could heal him." "The more closely he examined himself, so much the sharper became the stings of his conscience. To such a degree was this the case, that neither solace nor comfort existed for him, except in so far as he could deceive and forget himself." Mortal appliances were unavailing when the Spirit of God fastened conviction on the conscience; and it was only when this great mind assumed the attitude of a little child, and received the kingdom of heaven in that character, that he found peace and rest. Anodynes and opiates only made the malady more inveterate. Tranquillity fled while he pursued it in the direction of

Popish superstitions on the one hand, or of self-righteousness on the other. "Like a stricken deer he left the herd," and grief was his sole companion. Augustine endured a six years' conflict—like a beleaguered city—before he would surrender at discretion to Jehovah our Righteousness. Luther, it is well known, passed through a fearful discipline, which shook his strong soul as a whirlwind shakes the forest. In like manner, Calvin passed on amid deep distress to the spot of promised rest—the cross, and the crucified One upon it; and the moment at which the sinner is persuaded and enabled thus to believe the gospel, is that of his conversion to his God.

John Owen, the prince of divines, and one who is equally versant in the intricacies of a believer's experience, and the deepest doctrines of the faith, will furnish another example. When a student at Oxford, he was visited with anxieties regarding his soul, which led to a gloomy dejection which lasted, and harassed him at intervals, for years. Even he could not distinctly descry the exclusive and the consecrated ground on which the sinner is to stand before his God; and as long as that was shrouded in darkness, he could find no stable peace. Owen's was not a mind lightly to dismiss the question, How shall man be just before his God? after it had once been raised. But with all his sagacity, and power of intuitive discernment, he could not detect or grasp the truth as it is in Jesus. That truth was, up to a certain point, controlling his mind; it was at least teaching the youth to seek something better than he had yet arrived at. But settled peace eluded his grasp, and seasons of gloomy dejection beclouded his mind. The single eye was wanting. The single aim was not his. The simple faith which can remove mountains was not imparted, and wearisome days and nights became his lot. Except in his experimental writings, so marvellously exact as an analysis of feeling, and so richly fraught with the highest style of theology, we have no record of Owen's mental transition, but some of these writings enable us

to see how familiar he was with the terrors of the Lord, or how he had felt that the creature cannot thunder with a power like his. He had tracked with care every turning, and winding, and evasion, and pretence of man's perverse heart when seeking to escape from the humbling doctrines of redemption, and there is no reason to doubt that in his writings his own experience is embodied or reflected. The history of his own heart and soul is written by his own hand.

After years, then, of gloom and despondency, of legal terror, or self-righteous delay in receiving the simple gospel, the set time to favour Owen arrived; the scales fell from his eyes, and "he came seeing." He had gone to hear Dr Calamy, one of the leading ministers of Owen's youth, but found an unknown stranger appointed to guide the devotions of the assembly. He was urged to withdraw—in that spirit which characterises many who resort to the house of God to meet his servants, not himself—but declined, and it proved the birthday of his peace and rest. That unknown stranger addressed the flock on the text, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" It was a bow drawn at a venture by man; but Omniscience was directing the aim, and the truth emancipated John Owen. His case was met, his doubts and legal fears were at once pointed out and dispelled, and he walked forth from that house of God as the apostles did when their prison doors were opened by angelic power. The Spirit of the Lord poured light into the dark chambers of the soul through the medium of his own simple truth, and one was born of God who was to be both mighty in the Scriptures, and a father in Israel indeed. The sovereignty of the Spirit was thus displayed, pride was hidden from man, and God proclaimed again in his providence what he had recorded in his Word, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

One of the most instructive cases of providential conversion is recorded of a soldier in the army of Oliver Cromwell.* It is well known that those who served

* See Thornton on Repentance.

under that mysterious man were each furnished with a copy of the Scriptures, and that is, no doubt, one of the secrets which explain his victories and his glory. Among his soldiers, there was one who had been a wild and wayward youth, who had fled from his apprenticeship, and was enamoured rather of crime and dissipation than of holiness and truth. He was ordered out upon a skirmishing expedition or on some military duty, and returned to his quarters in the evening without an injury or a wound. At night, he discovered a hole made by a bullet in the Bible which he had carried about his person, and led by curiosity he traced how far the missile of death had penetrated. He found that it had touched the words, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth: and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."—(Eccles. xi. 9.) Now, that bullet preached repentance to that youth. The words to which it pointed were carried to the conscience and the heart by the Spirit of God. The soldier became a believer in Christ, awakened to solemn reflection by so strange an incident; and often observed, that the Bible was the means of saving both his body and his soul. The set time to favour him had come, and the God who is love never fails to find a messenger when he has work to do. It may be a raven carrying food to his prophet, or a rock yielding water to the parched and the famishing. It may be a thunderbolt striking down one sinner, and awakening his brother beside him to solemn thought; or it may be a bullet pointing to a power far more resistless and terrific than its own. But whatever it be, when God is with it, his work is accomplished—men are convinced of sin, of righteousness, and judgment.

The next case to which we point is that of Thomas Halyburton. His conversion, viewed in all its bearings, was one of the most remarkable which the history of the church supplies. While some are brought home to their Father's house without long delay, or many strug-

gles, this apostolic man had years of agitation, and often of harassing anguish, before he found rest in the righteousness which is by faith. His convictions of sin were pungent, and even awful; his tossings to and fro remind us of the reeling of a vessel in a tempest; and though his deliverance was described as sudden at the last, yet his racking agitations—the atheistic and daring opinions which haunted him—his efforts to repress the convictions which rose and swelled like the tide—his self-fighteousness and labouring in the fire—his assaults, temptations, and devices—his near approaches to deliverance and then his relapses,—all exhibit at once the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and the blindness of the sinner till that Spirit shed light upon the heart. He was thus brought very low, but it was that he might be exalted in due season; and the anguish which he endured, the protracted struggle which he maintained, ere he could descry or would submit to God's humbling method of salvation—all prepared the way for a grand deliverance when the set time arrived. And in Halyburton's case the transition was very clear. The light which shined into his soul was too bright, in contrast with the previous gloom, to leave any doubt that it emanated from the Sun of Righteousness—"the Light of the world." It was not a shading of nature into grace, as if the close of the one and the commencement of the other could not be clearly defined. It was not a difference of degree, but of kind, of essence, of nature; and that so marked and prominent, that he could not doubt that the finger of God was there. "He brought me from Sinai and its thunderings to Mount Zion, and the Mediator of the new covenant." "He revealed Christ in his glory. I now with wonder beheld that glory, ... and was made by this sight to say, 'Thou art fairer than the sons of men.'" Now, that was not merely the dawn—it was the perfect day of peace to the soul; and from that hour the reclaimed wanderer, the humbled self-justifier, the pardoned sinner, the emancipated bondsman, lived, and moved, and

had his being only to glorify his great Deliverer. Self-righteousness ceased at least to reign. Selfishness in every form melted as if in a thaw. Mind expanded and soared. The highest interests of others became objects of care co-ordinate with his own. He could say, "Return to thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee;" and from that hour it is known that he was a burning and a shining light; nay, he burned himself away in seeking to guide others and advance himself in the path that leads to glory, honour, and immortality. He was not baptized in the Jordan when it flowed without a ripple, but amid its swellings which roused the lion from his lair upon its banks, and he became steadfast and immovable in proportion to that trial.

The case of Halyburton may enable us to dispose of a question often raised, but capable, we think, of being set at rest, once for ever. That question is, May the time of conversion be generally ascertained? Some insist on knowing the precise period in every case; is it needful, is it possible that it should be known?

We reply—We doubt that it is not wise to agitate that question at all. That thousands now in glory, and many still on earth, have *thought* that they could fix the time, is certain; but we lean to the opinion, that in all ordinary cases that time cannot be known. The earnest soul, no doubt, often marks the period at which it concluded or hoped that the decided transition was made; but that opinion only shows that at that period the anxious mind had advanced so far that it could mark its own progress, trace its own transition, and fix on the time or the spot where it supposed that a change was wrought. In truth, however, the transition might be made—that is, the Holy Spirit might have planted the germ of immortal life in the soul—hours, days, weeks, months prior to the period fixed on by the earnest inquirer. It was only at that point that the mind had data sufficient to warrant a conclusion; but it was changes previously produced that warranted that conviction; so

that, in effect, conversion had taken place, or spiritual life had been imparted, perhaps at a much earlier stage of the soul's career. The grand transition was made in the spirit of the words, "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation." The leaven was lodged, and secretly spreading—the mustard-seed was planted, and silently springing up; but the mind was not conscious of it, or would not concede that the change had been wrought, until certain results were observed in the life, among the feelings, the affections, and desires of the soul.

Do we argue thus as if it were unimportant to settle the period of our conversion? On the contrary, what countless delusions would disappear were men diligent in making their conversion sure! How pure and how strong would the church of God then become! Let *the fact* be made certain beyond the reach of question —let the spurious and the genuine be thoroughly distinguished—let there be no assumptions in an affair so momentous. A clear, decided transition from the world and self to Christ, will make the life one of holy comfort; but a halting, and hesitating, and half transition, will keep the soul in a lifelong twilight, where man attempts to give one hand to the Redeemer and the other to the world, as thousands in all the churches do. It is all-important at once for the Converter's glory and the believer's peace, that our passing from death to life should be so decided as to be seen and read of all men —without ostentation, indeed, but also without disguise. There have been coins stamped in the mint so imperfectly, or so obscurely, that it was needful to recall, to fuse, and stamp them again, before they could pass current; and it may be even so with the imperfectly converted soul. It may be needful that it be cast into the furnace again—it often is so—in order that all doubt or suspicion as to its spiritual condition may be for ever at an end, that decision may take the place of hesitancy, and the Lord be followed by his people as resolutely as Baal is by his. Surely the change from dark-

ness to light, from self to Christ, from Satan to God, from death to life, from the bondage of the flesh to the freedom of the Spirit, should not be an obscure, or a scarcely perceptible thing! Nay, in the nature of things it cannot be so; and they who are reposing upon peradventures in such a case, may be found at last to be opposing the explicit injunction, which says, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election *sure*."

CHAPTER IX.

The Convert.

"I was a wand'ring sheep,
I did not love the fold;
I did not love my Shepherd's voice,
I would not be controlled.

I was a wayward child,
I did not love my home;
I did not love my Father's voice,
I loved afar to roam.

The Shepherd sought his sheep,
The Father sought his child;
* * * *
And now I love my Father's voice,
I love, I love his home."

BARTON.

The Convert.—Part Second.

Dr. Chalmers—Montague Stanley—Sir Andrew Agnew—Conversion of S. C. M., a Brahman—Of Don Juan Calderon, a Spanish priest—A converted Nun—A converted Jew—Christ the Alpha and Omega of all the converted.

Few cases can better illustrate the grand transition which is made when the sinner passes from death to life, than that of Dr Chalmers. His spiritual history divides itself into three. First, there was the period during which the objects of time entirely overlaid the interests of eternity—when man occupied the place of God; and earth, without compunction or alarm, received the attention which was due only to heaven. During that period, all that was peculiar to salvation or grand in redemption was a cause of violent antipathy, as it is to every unconverted man when he is fairly confronted with the truth of God. Even the transcendent powers of Chalmers could not penetrate the veil which hides the things of the Spirit from the eye of man; so that he, like the weakest of us all, groped like the blind for the wall—he not merely repudiated the gospel, but vehemently and indignantly defended that repudiation. It is true, he tells us that at one period he lived for nearly a year in a kind of "mental Elysium," regaled even to excitement by his contemplations; but it was while he thought of the majesty of the Being whom he regarded as God, of his omnipotence or his wisdom, but disregarded

or was utterly oblivious of the question, "How shall man be just before his Judge?" His, in short, was then the religion of a Theist. He overlooked the fall, and spoke and felt concerning God as if man had never sinned—or at least, though a sinner, had not much to fear from the Holy One. It was the God of creation or the God of Eden that formed the centre of that "mental Elysium," and not the God of our fallen world—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence a joy which sprang from ignorance—ignorance at once of God and of self, and which could end only in sorrow.

But this first stage in the spiritual history of the greatest among the moderns was followed by another, in which some might suppose conversion had taken place. The former antipathy to spiritual things had, up to a certain point, passed away. The soul and its salvation, God and preparation to meet him, had become subjects of absorbing importance; intense mental earnestness had taken the place of apathy; and was it true that Dr Chalmers was now converted, when he was labouring so assiduously, and praying with such apparent fervour? Had old things passed away, and all things become new? Had he really made the transition of which the Spirit is the author, and eternal redemption the end? On the contrary, he had only given self a new work to accomplish, without at all changing the principles on which he acted. He was now labouring to secure the favour of God, "not by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and received by faith alone," but by his own circumspection—his own painstaking and prayers—his own correct life, or his watchfulness over the heart's thoughts and the hand's doings. It was in that spirit that he struggled for about a year. Afflictions, trials, and the death of those whom he loved, could not undeceive him; and he continued to labour in the fire, unconscious still of the divine and simple specific for human sin and wo. As laboriously, though less grossly—as laboriously as ever an Hebrew of the Hebrews strove—did he go about to establish a right-

eousness of his own: and in glancing at this period of his spiritual history, it is solemnizing to think, that in this condition all his earnestness had not yet made him, in reality, a Christian man. Self, though in a modified form, was still his saviour. It was not the finished work of Christ. It was not a salvation *now*, at once, and for ever complete. It was a beautiful Babel tower, which man's own hand could build to heaven—it was a plea for the tribunal of God which man himself could furnish —that this earnest spirit was unconsciously but really pursuing; and in the end he was himself the boldest in avowing that truth.

At length, however, the third epoch began. The Spirit put forth his new-creating power, and the soul passed from death to life. Old things indeed passed away. Grace took the place of nature. No more struggling for life: Christ was received, and he is *The Life*. No more hope to purchase God's favour by amendment: Christ was all; and, as he was all, so self became less and less regarded, except as sinful and polluted. The gospel system, so long disliked, and for a time so entirely misunderstood, now became radiant with light, and smiling with a thousand attractions. Radical and ever-deepening convictions of personal sinfulness immediately appeared, and continued till the earthly career of that noble mind was so abruptly closed. In short, this was a thorough conversion. Christ crucified became indeed the wisdom and the power of God. He stood ever out before the eye of faith as the first and the last—once the lowliest of men, yet God our Saviour—once unknown or rejected, but now rejoiced in as all the soul's salvation, and all the soul's desire. That was conversion indeed and in truth—a power originating in heaven, and guiding the sinner thither.

We submit an instance of conversion from another sphere in life. Montague Stanley* was for some time an actor on the stage, and plunged into all the frivolities, at least, which give a bad pre-eminence to that pro-

* See Memoirs of Montague Stanley, by Rev. D. T. K. Drummond.

fession. Yet he was not without a kind of religion even then—a fragment of that which has been floated down from Eden, over the wreck of many generations. On the eve of fighting a duel, for example, he records that he retired to offer up a prayer on behalf of his mother, whom he fondly loved; and does not seem to have felt any incongruity between that act and his readiness, at the bidding of a tyrant custom, yielded to by moral cowards, to stain his hands with a fellow-mortal's blood. But there was mercy in store for this duellist. A friend was, in the providence of God, removed to India, and, like many others in that land of idols and of death, he there found that God whom he had resisted in the land of his fathers. With the ardour of a young convert, he began to ply Stanley with appeals on the subject of religion and the soul, which he for a season attempted now to parry by ridicule, now to silence by frowns. At one time, his friend was addressed as indulging the rhapsodies of Methodism; at another time, he was assailed with the world's favourite missile, as "righteous overmuch." But still the truth began to take effect; as by the slow dropping from the eaves, the stone was made smooth; and one of the strongest concessions ever made to the demands of conscience and the truth was made by Montague Stanley. In preparing his part as a player for the stage, he became careful to omit all the oaths and offensive language that occurred—thus attempting to keep conscience quiet, by conceding so much to the earnestness of his friend in India. Such a transparent compromise, however, was soon felt to be inadequate by this earnest soul. The evasion of oaths, or the elision of obscenity from his part in a play, was not conversion to the living God; and Stanley must either be converted or be more than ever a wretched man, pursuing phantoms for happiness, and seeking a portion for his soul in things that perished as he grasped, or polluted as he enjoyed them. From time to time he accordingly advanced, by stages which could easily be traced, along the path to which the Word of God shuts

up the sinner, and was able at last to say, "Thanks to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; I hope and trust I am a new creature in him." He had continued amid many struggles to take part for a time, after his earnestness began, in the business of the stage; but now all must be abandoned that conflicted so extremely as his profession did with the holy mind of God. The prospect of eminence was before him—for he was gradually taking up the position to which talents like his were sure to guide a bold and determined mind; but all was forsaken when its sinfulness was felt, and a theatrical career was at once and resolutely abjured. He then recorded his "thanks to the Lord, who called him out of darkness into light." "I am emancipated," he says, "from a most ungodly profession;" and, like one who had tasted the sweets of liberty, he tried to make others free, by warning those who were still fluttering around the destroying flame, to flee from its dangers and death. On reviewing his career prior to his departure, and some years after the great transition was made, he spoke of himself as a "monument of grace." While he rejoiced in all that had been done for him, and never once questioned the reality and the heavenly origin of the radical revolution which had been wrought in his soul, his whole subsequent course was one continued proof that the change was at once deep and decided—a change that stretched in its results into the eternity on which he has entered. Here, as in the case of Calvin, Halyburton, and Chalmers, Christ became the All—the Ἐν καὶ Πάν of the soul. He was to them precisely what he was to Paul—the once despised but now adored; and that is the result of the Spirit's work, which plants the believer's foot on the threshold of glory, or throws a gulf between the converted and the unconverted, as wide as that which separates life from death.

But another case, which very aptly illustrates the transforming power of grace is that of Sir Andrew Agnew. It is well known that, from his earliest years, he was generous, kind, humane, and moral; indeed, a

model at once of benevolence and virtue to all within his sphere. He came at last, and as if by accident, within the range of the gospel. He heard its humbling, yet hallowing truths—and what was the result? Did that man so bland, and so beneficent to all around him, at once open his heart for the truth of God to take possession of his mind, and to control the soul? Was there, in short, amid the amenities of his natural character, aught that was kindred with the system which came from heaven to be the means of purifying man's soul, and fitting it for glory? Hear his biographer in reply:—"All the natural enmity of the heart was drawn out against the way of salvation unfolded in the gospel; and, strange to say, he who was so singularly upright, so pure-minded, vice-hating, affectionate, and lovely in his natural character, that he seemed one 'not far from the kingdom of God,' took offence at the holy character of the truth! Its charge of utter sinfulness before God appeared perfectly groundless. The preacher, 'who had brought such strange things to his ears,' he would not hear again, and the very subject was interdicted."* One of his early friends has recorded, that "if the term dared be applied to any mortal, we might with truth say, he was a man without a sin;" and yet he who was so blameless, so harmless, and so eulogized in man's esteem, is detected to have felt all that the Scriptures say of the enmity of our nature against the Holy One. So resolute was he against the plan which embodies the power, the wisdom, and the love of God, that he interdicted the mention of it: it was so offensive or so painful.

It was by slow degrees, that the truth took full effect upon the heart and soul of Sir Andrew. In the winter of 1818, for the first time, he heard a gospel sermon. The revulsion of which it became the occasion, kept him long on the world's side; and in the year 1821, during the visit of George IV. to Ireland, where Sir Andrew was present, he only "felt undecided" as to whether he

* See one of the most instructive biographies in our language—Memoirs of the Life of Sir Andrew Agnew, Bart., by Dr M'Crie, p. 53.

should withdraw from the world, or mix in its giddy round. "His taste for the little *agremens* of polished society, his love of innocent gaiety, his accomplishments, which rendered him always a welcome member of the joyous circle, in which he was so well qualified to shine—all conspired to hide from him the real tendency of these things."*

Another year rolled over him, however: his Sovereign visited Scotland, and amid the frivolous festivities of that season, Sir Andrew discovered, "that all unknown to himself, a change had been wrought within which unfitted him for relishing, as he had once done, the frivolities of fashionable life." He gave expression to such feelings at the time, and thus withdrew from scenes which can be, to a child of God, only what the grave-clothes would have been to Lazarus, had he been carried from the sepulchre without the command, "loose him, and let him go."

This, then, was no sudden transition. It was measured and gradual,—all in harmony with man's moral nature, but not less in harmony with the mind of the Spirit. "It was necessary," this convert said, "that the foundation of sand should be swept away, and that it should be trodden to the dust, ere I could effectually seek for help where alone it was to be found." Nor is the sentiment too strong. To a nature which was proud though not haughty, and intensely self-righteous, with much reason while at *man's* tribunal to be so, the abasing doctrine of the Cross appeared with peculiar offensiveness. But as Sir Andrew was destined to do a noble work, the Master whom he served trained him wisely for his sphere—and when we think of Sir Andrew Agnew, on the one hand, interdicting all reference to the peculiarities of redemption in his hearing, and on the other bearing the cross in the highest places, with a meek heroism worthy of the best of the martyrs, we cannot help exclaiming, "What hath God wrought!" The Lord of the Sabbath—that is, the Prince of Peace—

* Memoirs, p. 68.

needed not the service of the imperious or the proud: no "Draco of devotion," as Sir Andrew was insolently called, was required to fasten the nation's attention on the only relic of Eden which has come down to man—to vindicate its rights and uphold its sanctities. Its Lord, therefore, selected one of the meekest, the gentlest, and lowliest of men,—but one who to these graces added that of a courage beyond the world's boasted heroes. The rock has been quoted as his emblem: it was also his stay—and standing on the sure foundation, he was spiritually a victor in a great fight of afflictions.

It is instructive to notice how Heathens and Romanists pass from their respective errors, to hold the truth as it is in Jesus. S. C. M. was a Brahman of the highest caste, and was born and trained in a village where, he says, that "horrid superstition reigns." In the city of Dacca, where he was sent to be educated, he first heard the gospel, and he records, that he "sometimes cursed and abused the preachers, whose only fault was that they offered salvation for his soul." Five years after that period he visited Calcutta, and one inducement was, that he might "wash off his pollution by bathing in the sacred river Ganges—and see the image of Kali, the beloved idol of his superstitious devotion." Nor did he fail to perform his purpose, for he records that his first care was to adopt the superstitious courses on which he had resolved. Disappointed in finding the education which he sought in some of the seminaries which he entered, S. C. M. applied for admission into a missionary institution, and there he began slowly to discover the absurdities of Hinduism. The revolution in his opinions, however, he says, "was merely mental," for he "continued to worship idols, and felt a sort of scrupulousness to take any thing that is forbidden in the Shastras." With all this, he says, he was far from believing in Christianity. The abandoning of Hinduism does not necessarily imply the adoption of the truth as it is in Jesus, and this Brahman had much training to undergo ere that truth was embraced. The argument from mi-

racles in favour of Christianity convinced his mind for a time; but "some subtle objections by some friends took away the germ of faith from his heart,"—and from that time he began, in all the pride of youth, and of an unsanctified intellect, to indulge in vain and unbridled speculations. They ended in the conviction that "there is no God—no distinction between good and evil, and consequently no state of rewards and punishments"—and in that condition the speculator continued for about two years and a-half. "By degrees, however," he says, "I came to know the emptiness and vanity of my deluded imaginations—but still I was what is called a Deist." About the same time, his inclination towards Christianity was renewed, and a train of circumstances, which we need not tarry to describe, hastened the inquirer forward in the right direction, far more rapidly than he desired. Intercourse with those who know God's truth—listening to their lectures and teaching—conference with men, who had passed from Hinduism to the Saviour, and other means, promoted his progress; and he writes, after an interview with a Christian Hindoo —"I was quite restless, and began to think if I could with reason on my side become a Christian; and after some two hours' meditation, *I resolved to be converted* after sufficient inquiry. Next day, I rose about half-past four, went on my terrace, and began to think and pray till sunrise; the day was Sunday, and I passed it with quiet restlessness—and I got no one to whom to communicate my thoughts." He had begun to search the Scriptures, and hastened from friend to friend for explanations of what perplexed him. "The shining light of the Holy Word" rose upon S. C. M. at last; he says, "By this time, I began to inquire the truth with great earnestness and zeal, and my inquiry, by the grace of God, and prayers of my friends and my own, ended in thorough conversion of my heart and mind." His desires now became eager "for the conversion of his countrymen, to the only Mediator between God and man;" and S. C. M. was admitted into the church of Christ by

baptism in his twenty-third year. May he not be rejoiced over as a brand plucked from the burning?

Here then, is a peculiar exhibition of the powers of converting grace. One who "hated the name of Jesus" —who "was fearless and self-dependent"—who was "seduced into wild, atheistical speculations," and who "denied that there was any guilt in wickedness or crime"—was brought to embrace the Saviour.* Now, what was the process through which he passed to that consummation? Atheism and deism were two of its stages. Ere the truth could be imparted, error in its most resolute forms took the control of the mind—and "the strong man armed" did not cede his possession till the claims of truth had been asserted by a power which could not be gainsaid. The soul for a time would rather be harassed and agonized, than submit to God's simple plan of salvation by faith in his Son.

Parallel with this, we place a conversion from Popery to the religion of God and salvation. Don Juan Calderon was a Spanish priest, of superior mental acquirements, and a deeply reflective tendency. When about fifteen years of age, he entered into one of the religious orders, in the town of Alcazar de San Juan, and in that institution he passed through the usual training, amid excesses from which his moral nature revolted. "Why do I pretend to believe that which I do not? why do I confess when, in truth, I do not confess? I am a vile man; I am a miserable deceiver."—These are some of his recorded sentiments regarding the discipline through which he passed, from which his mind, while unsophisticated and unwarped, recoiled, but which the terrible system under which he was reared is calculated too thoroughly and too successfully to efface. Bound as Calderon was by monastic vows, he could not escape without degradation from the meshes in which his conscience was entangled, and he succeeded at last in silencing conscience and justifying the falsehoods which he daily practised by pleading the advantage which ac-

* These extracts are from documents before us regarding the case.

crued from them. He soon discovered that others of his order were as little convinced as he was of the propriety of their vows and conventual practices, and that such views were not very sternly condemned, even by their superiors, although "almost all those who attended the courses of philosophy and theology were unbelievers." He passed from this stage through various mental phases. At one time simple deism, or a kind of rational legalism, ruled in his mind. He was shocked by the conduct of his superiors: and "such a religion and such a priesthood" as he daily beheld, appeared to him to refute the pretensions of the entire system, or, as he viewed it, of the Christian religion.* Priest, preacher, confessor, and professor of philosophy as he successively became, Calderon was still wretched—his life was in antagonism with his convictions—and amid the harassing agitations of his lot, he sank at last into atheism —at least he concluded "that the examination and direction of his conduct were as foreign to the Supreme Being as were the movements of an ant to the attention of an emperor." The universe-god of Dupuis was his god—and Jehovah was disowned. In course of time, difficulties occurred from which he could find no way of extrication, and the idea of suicide suggested itself as the remedy. "Pardon this, O merciful God!" he exclaims; "Thy infinite mercy, O most compassionate Saviour, was at that very time preparing me for a habitation in my Father's house. I approved of the idea of suicide; and could I do otherwise as an atheist? For what purpose continue unhappy? What difference is there, I said to myself, in being reduced to nothing a few years earlier or later? What is the world? What is man? What is life? Here at this very time, in this very bed, let me die of inanition. There is nobody here who will concern himself about me. Let me feign to be ill, and say I have no appetite, and soon the ele-

* It is refreshing to hear Calderon say, amid all these things—"Notwithstanding, however, of all that is here disclosed, I would not say that God has not in these institutions some souls who have not bowed down to the mass of corruption which is in them."

ments which constitute my body will take a new form, and enter into the immense circle of matter, and go to form new beings." Such was the religion of this priest—such was the reasoning of this professor of philosophy—such were the hopes of this confessor. It was the fool's cry—"No God!" Yet that very God whom he denied was at hand to help.

Calderon escaped from his difficulties. Reason and conscience regained the control of his mind, and it slowly rose to a more correct estimate of the ways of God with man. Having escaped from mental anxiety, he also escaped from pressing difficulties. He prayed now, but found no answer. He examined the religion of the Jews, but was soon repelled by the heartlessness of their worship. He resorted to a Protestant temple, where, for the first time, he heard the religion of the New Testament opened up, or found men of intelligence who could explain, and who professed to hold it. The Scriptures became his guide, and from them he extracted by independent study the great central doctrines of the truth—beginning with the incarnation, and ending with a free pardon through the righteousness of Christ. Intellectually, he could not help seeing that these tenets were taught in the New Testament. The only possible question which could arise was—"Are they true?" and of that, after inquiry, he could not doubt. He had passed through various stages. Deep superstition in youth, with atheism and deism in their turns, had controlled his mind. In each he had tried to find repose for his soul, but found only labour and sorrow. There was anarchy in the reason, and anarchy in the conscience, and anarchy among the feelings; and nothing that Calderon could discover, either in popery or atheism, could allay it.

And how did light break in? How was he brought from the fearful pit? It was by the felt adaptation of the gospel to his wants. It was the power of truth to satisfy the reason, to cleanse the conscience, and spread harmony among his chaotic feelings, which first con-

vinced Calderon that the New Testament was from God. He had once succeeded in reducing the articles of his creed so far that scarcely aught remained to be believed, but he now took up the simple truth of God, and, guided by it, his soul escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler, alike from the corruptions of Popery, and the cold and cheerless domain of atheism. He who had once approved of suicide upon principle, now clung to the Saviour as the Life; and his rescue from that dreary state, with all the tossings to and fro which accompanied or preceded it, forms a signal illustration of the triumphs of grace—it proclaims aloud to all who have ears to hear that none teaches like God.*

Nothing external in our world is more gladdening to the eye of man than the Elims which sometimes welcome the weary traveller in the desert. The palm trees and the plenty of water refresh and reanimate, amid the waste of barren rock, and yet more barren sand which spreads around; and there are scenes not less refreshing in regard to the spiritual world. How bleak is the prospect where Popery prevails, and where the curse which that system involves spreads moral desolation around? Yet even there, bright spots, or spiritual Elims sometimes greet the eye, and tell what Christendom will be when the system of Romanism shall have perished before the brightness of God's truth.

Elizabeth Anderson was of Irish descent, and trained in all the exclusiveness of the arch-heresy of Rome. She was devoted to the life of a nun from her cradle, and nursed amid austerities which nothing but man's inherent self-righteousness could enable a frail mortal frame to endure. It became her high ambition to be a "bride of Christ," according to the impious language of the devotees of her creed; and for a length of time that object was steadily kept in view. Amid her training, however, streaks of light were to break in upon her darkness. At the early age of three, she lost her father, who was a Protestant, and her mother, a Romanist,

* See Evangelical Christendom, vol. iv.

reared her as we have mentioned; but compunctions of conscience and convictions of sin seized upon her, which neither the terrors nor the charms of the confessional could assuage. When the daughter was about twelve years of age, the mother was seized by a disease which carried her to the tomb, and amid her illness she was awakened to a sense of eternal realities. Bishop Doyle, the friend and spiritual counsellor of the family, did all that he could to meet the demands of the dying woman's reason, or to hush the terrors of her troubled conscience—but the disease lay too deep for his appliances. The Bible, which had been read to the dying father by the elder sister, was next appealed to. Blessed by the Spirit, who is its author, light entered the soul, and in due time she found peace where all might find it—at the Cross. The daughters, now orphans, were enabled to cling to what had brought joy to their departing mother; and in spite of all that ingenuity could devise, or authority enlist, or human affection prompt, they were both emancipated by the Bible from the vassalage of Rome, in a way which illustrates the omnipotence of grace—they stood fast in the liberty which Christ imparts. For two years did the conflict last; but the Spirit of God triumphed at once over the authority and the affection of man, and these two souls were at last compassed about with songs of deliverance.*

Another instance in the conversion of a Jew may farther illustrate this vital subject. Dr Isaac Da Costa of Amsterdam is one of the most gifted and devoted of the Hebrew nation in modern times, and he has briefly described the process by which he passed from death to life.† The dispersion and exile of his nation had long been an object of earnest study to Da Costa. Why are my people still a separate nation after their national peculiarities have perished? was in substance the question which he raised; and he says, "Through the mer-

* See "The Morning of Life. A Memoir of Miss A——, who was educated for a Nun."

† See Preface to his work, *Israel and the Gentiles.*

ciful guidance of the God of my fathers, the attempt to solve this question became in his hand the means of leading to the knowledge of his blessed Son, the Lord Jesus." Searching into the records of the past, he emerged from a state of incredulity. He was guided at last to believe first the truth of the Old Testament and then that of the New. He was "led insensibly from thought to thought, and induction to induction," till he came to the simple and certain conclusion, that the misery of the Hebrews arises from their rejection of Messiah; and by these and kindred discoveries he was taught at length to hail Jesus Christ as the Son of David, the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. As years rolled on, he was more and more convinced that the condition of his countrymen was an abiding testimony to the truth of the Christian religion, a living commentary on the Scriptures, and a certain pledge of the entire fulfilment of prophecy. Thus convinced and satisfied, he says, "Surely, in confessing myself by the grace of God a disciple of Jesus Christ, I did not cease—nay, then I only began, to rejoice that I was indeed a Jew." He assures his countrymen that they will yet adore Him whom their nation pierced. In the Man of Sorrows, Da Costa himself found all the demands of his intellect responded to—all the fears of his conscience hushed—all the feelings of his heart drawn forth, in a way which at once elevated and gladdened his soul; and he thus joyfully re-echoed the language of a much earlier convert of his nation—"We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Those who have had much experience in guiding souls to Christ, could easily add to these illustrations of conversion other cases from their private observation, calculated at once to elucidate the truth and guide the inquirer after it. We have known one so calm and systematic after long and deep distress, at the period from which he dated his conversion, that he deliberately noted the moment on his watch—the moment, we mean, at

which he caught the first echo of the glad tidings, or the first glimpse of the Saviour, as possibly a Saviour even for him. We have known more than one so gently drawn away from the world's frivolities to a Redeemer's enduring joys, that they greatly feared the whole might be a delusion, because they felt no terror. Christ had become their joy and rejoicing, and that should have been enough; but they often feared that their peace was deception, and their joy but a phantom. We have seen an intelligent youth delivered from the bond of Socinianism, which was gradually seducing him into the lower deep of Socialism, by the simple words, "I will," in that verse of John which says, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." He could not believe that this was a creature boldly prescribing by his *will* to the Eternal; the scales fell from the inquirer's eyes, and the whole ended in his conversion to God. He marvelled much at his former blindness, and spoke with earnest pathos of that Saviour whom he had long disowned, to all within his sphere.

But one thing is clear in regard to all these conversions—wherever they began, they ended in Christ. The origin, the means, the progress, might be diverse, but the result was identical in all. Some, like Matthew Henry and Henry Martyn, may have made the transition they scarce knew how; but all agree, as Halyburton did, to approve of God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ alone; all desire to advance the glory of God their Saviour; all regard Christ's yoke as easy, and his burden as light; all combine to mourn for sin with deep and godly sorrow; all arrive, sooner or later, at good hope through grace concerning their own personal salvation; all profoundly revere the statutes and ordinances of their Lord; all desire to spread the savour of his name; all long and pray for the day when they shall be perfect in holiness, even as their Father who is in heaven is perfect—when the Lord God and the Lamb shall be the light and the rejoicing of all the redeemed.

CHAPTER X.

The Convert—Mistakes.

"My steps, I know, are on the plains of danger,
For sin is near;
But looking up, I pass along, a stranger,
In haste and fear.

This earth has lost its power to drag me downward,—
Its spell is gone;
My course is now right upward, and right onward,
To yonder throne."

BONAR.

The Convert—Mistakes.—Part Third.

Natural effects often substituted for grace—Music—Errors concerning it—Thomas Campbell—Sudden conversion—Examples—Spurious conversion—Ignatius Loyola—St. John Gualberto—St. Bruno—Vows and covenants—Pelagianism.

SINCE the Saviour has placed the radical truth of conversion as the sentinel on the frontier of his kingdom, and as none can pass it unchallenged, it is well to view that truth in every light, that the soul may be thoroughly established.

And there is one danger on the subject to which we should prominently advert. In some cases the mind is roused from the stupor of nature by very simple, or apparently casual, means. A sentence in a book—a suggestion from a friend—a remark heard in conversation—a question asked—a verse quoted or read—a sickness and loneliness which necessitate reflection—these and countless other causes, as trivial or insignificant in themselves, have led to results which ended in conversion. But in other cases, the mind is roused by something solemn and startling, such as enlists all the feelings of the soul, or kindles a fire in the conscience, which perhaps no skill of man can quench. Now, when the mind has become thus excited, and when its deepest thoughts have been turned to spiritual things, there is a danger lest that excitement should be substituted for the spiritual change which only the grace of God can produce. Some preacher

of more than ordinary power and pathos has been heard. Tears have been copiously shed, under his appeals and his cogency. The hearer has caught a portion of that fervour; the heart's deepest feelings have been stirred, and because he was excited or regaled, because he wept, and was distressed under the vivid descriptions which he heard, that hearer concluded that he was converted—that is, he was a Christian. In other words, the mere power of man's pleading, the pathos of man's oratory, the graphic character of man's representations, are supposed to have done the work of the Spirit of God. These stirred and stimulated minds might have felt in the same way at the representation of Desdemona's murder, or of King Lear's grief; but still the excited feelings are substituted for the new heart and the right spirit which "the Lord the Spirit" imparts; and man is asleep in a delusion the more disastrous or deadly, because it often closely resembles the truth.

But of all the counterfeits of conversion or religious impression, none is more common than that which is connected with grand and sensuous music. The following extract from the Life of Thomas Campbell will illustrate our meaning:—"On the morning before the French entered Ratisbon, during the late war," he says, "a solemn ceremony was held by the monks of the Benedictine College of St James. One passage in the Latin service was singularly *apropos* to the fear of the inhabitants from siege and bombardment. The dreadful prophecy, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou shalt be made desolate,' was chanted by a loud single voice from one end of the long echoing cathedral. A pause more expressive than any sound succeeded, and then the whole thunder of the organs, trumpets, and drums broke in. I never conceived that the *terrific* in music could be carried to such a pitch." Now, such are the works by which Popery counterfeits spiritual impressions; and such the scenic or sensuous exhibitions which British poets eulogise as "*apropos* to the fears of bombardment and death"—it is by "the whole thunder of the organs,

trumpets, and drums," that men are prepared to meet the King of Terrors! Music can, no doubt, produce marvellous effects. It has inspired an awe akin to that which the roar of the avalanche occasions, and thousands have wept and melted, or rejoiced and exulted under its effects; but it cannot do the work of Omnipotence—it can neither change the heart of man, nor make it holy, and whatever falls short of that is delusive. Yet it is by such an agent that men would supersede the truth of God, and, in doing so, give the needy a stone instead of bread, or a serpent instead of a fish. The impressions made by music are in themselves just as remote from all that is spiritual as the human is from the divine —and they are dangerous in proportion as the feelings which they excite resemble those which religion may produce. A professing Protestant may wait on the oratory of some gifted minister of Christ on the Sabbath; and the next temple roof which covers that worshipper may be that of a Popish chapel, to which he resorts merely to be regaled by the music. Such emotions may stir men's passions; but it is by an influence which is earthly and sensual, and which will perish with the things of earth. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost."

This error is sometimes systematized. By various appliances brought to bear upon the feelings rather than the conscience of man, some allege that conversions are wrought amid the ferment of an excited audience, and deny the very name of conversion to religious impressions, unless they have been accompanied with outcry, and wo, and trembling. In such cases, the converts of a single meeting are sometimes counted by tens and by twenties; and, because men's bodily frames are agitated, it is concluded that their hearts are renewed, that old things have passed away, and all things become new. It is thus that the truth is injured, and indeed often distorted and abused.

But this subject of sudden conversion is one which has rarely been wisely or fully considered. There is

enough in the Word of God to warn us not to deny the possibility of such conversions. He whose word commanded the universe to be, and who said, "Let there be light," can as easily command the light to shine out of darkness in the soul, and that in the twinkling of an eye. Cases are known in which a rapid transition was made from the darkness or the bondage of nature to the light and the freedom of grace. While the sin-laden one was striving to pour out his heart before God, while the Scripture was pondered over, or while the Word was heard, the burden has fallen off, and the soul has escaped from the bondage and the wretchedness of sin. The freeness and the power of grace, the simplicity and the fulness of redemption, have been discovered; and the mind has cast itself in blissful serenity on the love of a covenant God in Christ. We have known one, who had pined for years under distress and depressing fear, permanently emancipated from the bondage which enthralled the soul, by the truth of God that Christ has for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Hope then threw its bright light around the converted heart, and the sinner rejoiced in the liberty with which Christ maketh free. Bunyan tells, that while at sport with his ungodly companions, "a voice did suddenly dart from heaven into his soul, which said, 'Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?'" and he never more knew peace till he found it at the Cross. One who eventually became an eminent preacher of the gospel, heard Whitefield preach while the soul was dead in sin. "He described the Sadducee," records the convert; "this did not touch me: I thought myself as good a Christian as any man in England. From this he went to the Pharisees. He described their exterior decency, but observed that the poison of the viper rankled in their hearts. This rather shook me. At length, in the course of the sermon he abruptly broke off, paused for a few moments, then burst into a flood of tears, lifted up his hands and eyes, and exclaimed, 'O my hearers, the wrath to come! the

wrath to come!' These words sank deep into my heart, like lead into the waters. I wept; and, when the sermon was ended, retired to be alone. For days and weeks I could think of nothing else. Those awful words would follow me wherever I went—'The wrath to come! the wrath to come!'" And thus was a brand plucked from the burning, and not only so, but made a light to illumine others in the wide sphere which he was destined to fill. And these are specimens of the ways in which God by his Spirit has arrested and converted not a few. All was made to depend on the decision of an hour or an instant; for the only wise God knew how to shut up the sinner to the necessity of a choice between life and death, between the blessing and the curse, between agony or ecstasy for ever.

Withal, however, it would be a very defective account of conversion, did we fail to repeat that many may be drawn to God in a way so silently or so passively, that they cannot mark the era. This is specially true of those whose hearts have been renewed in infancy. We do not overlook the fact, that the promising piety of the young is often like the morning cloud and the early dew. Hopes have been cherished only to end in bitter disappointment—the blossoms that looked so fair never matured into fruit; for the world's rude touch, or its defiling ways, have proved too surely that the impressions which promised so much were from man and not from God, from earth and not from heaven. Nero in childhood was mild and docile—in manhood he rejoiced like the tiger in human blood; and some who seemed all consecrated to God in youth, have not merely gone astray in their riper years, but gloried in effacing the vestiges of their juvenile religion. There are rivers which lose themselves in sands or marshes, and never reach the sea. There are blossoms which blacken and wither without producing fruit. There are infants who live their little day, and die, leaving the bereaved heart to wonder why they were born at all; and an analogy to these exists in the domain of spiritual things.

Others, however, have been sanctified from their infancy. The Scriptures tell of more than one case in which that happened;* and when conversion thus takes place in early life, we do not expect the same kind of transition as is made in riper years, when sins have accumulated, and actual transgressions augmented the guilt of the original stain. Slowly and in silence the change was effected. The sovereign Spirit took unchallenged possession of the heart for God. Natural waywardness was subdued; and some of these early converts have grown up to show what man might have been had sin never defaced his primal beauty, or what he will yet become when he shall be presented "without fault before the throne of God;" when he shall put away childish things, and "see as he is seen, and know as he is known."

It might be profitable to submit an instance of spurious conversion—such as is often substituted among the superstitious and the ignorant for the genuine work of the Spirit; and none better could be found in the whole history of Christendom than that of Ignatius Loyola. At first a chivalrous soldier, and wounded in a siege, he then turned the whole bent of his subtle yet ardent nature to advance the interests of the Papacy at a time when it greatly needed so resolute an ally. In a vision with which St Peter favoured him, he was fixed in his purpose to abandon the camp, and devote himself to the church; and he did so with a fanaticism which nothing could quell. His ardent imagination was excited in an unearthly measure. He became a devotee of an original type; and amid macerations, and penances, and sufferings, which had wellnigh proved fatal to life, a spurious conversion took place. It happened thus: "The Virgin Mother with the infant Jesus in her arms, effulgent in celestial majesty, presented herself before him, and for some space of time, with incredible benignity, remained in view." By this clumsy piece of superstition, Loyola was rendered more decided

* 1 Sam. iii. 1; 1 Kings xiv. 13; Luke i. 15; 2 Tim. iii. 15.

still. He became, in fact, a beggar, "purchased a long hempen cloak of the most rugged texture, a tunic, a rope for a girdle, shoes of matted Spanish broom, a pilgrim's staff, turned at the end, with a drinking bowl;" and thus equipped, went forth to prop up the tottering Papacy, to counteract Luther, and exemplify to all coming ages what Popish conversions are—conversions which begin in the flesh, not with the Spirit, which are wrought by the Virgin or some other sinful creature, and not by Omnipotent grace—in brief, a hempen cloak, a rope for a girdle, and a pilgrim's staff, instead of the seamless robe and the whole armour of God. Conversions these which end with the church, not with Christ; which augment instead of mortifying the power of self in its most subtle development, and which leave the soul immersed in the bondage or chafed by the drudgery of legalism, instead of raising it to the lofty and secure elevation to which the gospel exalts the soul which is indeed born of the Spirit.

But others of the equivocal saints of Romanism deserve to be noticed here. St John Gualberto, a reformer of the Benedictines who died in 1073, was converted, in the popish sense, as follows:—He had undertaken in youth, at his father's instigation, to revenge the murder of his only brother Hugo, and unexpectedly met the assassin on the evening of Good Friday in a steep and narrow path in the neighbourhood of Florence. Gualberto drew his sword to dispatch the murderer of his brother; but the assassin fell upon his knees, and extending his arms in the form of a cross, adjured his assailant by the passion of Christ to spare him. The youth was struck with sudden compunction, and remembering that the Redeemer prayed for his murderers on the cross, he dropt his sword, prayed for divine support at such a crisis, held out his hand to raise the suppliant, and embraced him in token of forgiveness. All this may be explained and believed. But the legend proceeds to tell that Gualberto proceeded in sad solemnity to the nearest church, that of St Mariato, and enter-

ing there, knelt before the crucifix on the altar. His rage had now given place to tears; his heart melted within him; and as he wept before the Saviour's image, imploring mercy because he had shown mercy, he fancied that, in gracious reply to his prayer, the figure bowed its head. This miracle, for such he deemed it, completed the revolution which had begun when he was about to slay the assassin, and another saint was by another miracle prepared for the Roman calendar.

The case of St Bruno is similar. He was born at Cologne, of rich and noble parents, and was sent to Paris in his youth to study theology, under a famous doctor of that day. In process of time that doctor died, and his scholar followed him to the grave. The service for the dead was chanted. The words, "*Responde mihi quantas habes iniquitates,*" occur in it, and when they were uttered in the chant, the dead man half arose from the bier and answered, "*Accusatus sum.*" The attendants fled, affrighted by the miracle, and the thought that one reputed so holy should have been condemned. Next day the funeral was attempted again, and when the ominous words were repeated, the corpse again from its bier exclaimed, "*Judicatus sum.*" A third time the obsequies were essayed, and more emphatically than ever the departed doctor declared, "*Damnatus sum recto judicio Dei.*" Bruno was appalled by such testimony from beyond the grave, and fled from the world to escape the portion of Raymond his master. He selected a desert spot near Grenoble for his retreat, and along with other associates he there spent his life in fasting, mortification, and silence. It is by such clumsy miracles that Popery promotes conversions, swells the catalogue of its saints, and thickens the folds of that veil by which men are first blinded, and then misled to ruin.*

Connected with this exhaustless subject of conversion we might find many other points on which to dwell. We might tell at length of that frequent result of con-

* For these and many similar legends, see "Legends of the Monastic Orders," by Mrs Jameson, *passim*.

version which prompts the convert to dedicate himself to missionary work. David Brainerd, Henry Martyn, and John Macdonald, are instances of this. In imitation of their Lord, their pity and their sympathies for man were world-wide. They embraced all human kind in their large affections, and proceeded to heal its wounds by beckoning it to their Redeemer. Or we might speak of the vows often formed, and the covenants entered into, at conversion, which often subsequently entangle and ensnare. Dictated by a scrupulous but often not an enlightened conscience, proceeding often from zeal without knowledge, and founded upon self or man's doings, not on Christ's finished work, it is sometimes found impossible to keep them, and we have known the conscience defiled by such rash resolutions. An intelligent and zealous youth, at the period of his transition from darkness to light, vowed that he would never more read a newspaper. He became, in the providence of God, a prominent public person; and his position made it impossible for him to pay his vow. These, and similar bonds, are often suggested by Satan as entanglements to the soul, and should be watched against as will-worship and self-pleasing, rather than as aught demanded by the Holy One and the Just. They are not necessarily evil, but they too generally entangle and perplex.

Or we might have dwelt at length on that form of error so rife and so zealous in our day, by which man is taught that he can begin a saving work in his own soul. It is the darling wish of man to invade the province of Jehovah, and effect by nature what only grace can achieve. Hence countless systems of error, all pampering self, all based on the assumed falsehood of God's truth, and all to be overthrown by a sound and scriptural conversion. Pelagianism, which looks upon man as in fact unfallen, and semi-pelagianism, which grants the fall, but says, that man can lift himself erect again, alike disappear before the teaching of the Spirit. But the practical question, which every self-loving soul

should adjust, is this, Has the Spirit of God renewed my nature? Have I entered the kingdom of heaven by the converting power of God, or only by the persuasions and the habits of man? Is the new spirit given to me? or am I still an alien—still without God and without hope in the world? Till that be answered, all is solemn trifling. When it is adjusted, the soul is a child of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. The day-star has arisen in the heart, and its home at last will be where "there is no night."

CHAPTER XI.

Diversities of Christian Experience.

"I thought that the course of the pilgrim to heaven
Would be bright as the summer, and glad as the morn;
Thou showedst me the path,—it was dark and uneven,
All rugged with rock, and all tangled with thorn.

I dreamed of celestial reward and renown;
I grasped at the triumph which blesses the brave;
I asked for the palm branch, the robe, and the crown,—
I asked, and thou showedst me a cross and a grave."

SIR R. GRANT.

The Diversities of Christian Experience.

The basis of these diversities—David Brainerd—Dr. William Gordon—President Edwards—Dr. Chalmers—John Bunyan—Dr. Love—Philip Melancthon—Thomas Halyburton—The sovereignty of the Spirit—Come *now*, and *as we are*—Spiritual vicissitudes.

ALTHOUGH the lives of all believers are one in their origin, their nature, and termination, their peculiar aspects are innumerable, and endlessly diversified. Like the human countenance, they are all composed of a certain number of features in common; but the finer shades, the more minute characteristics, are multiform to an extent which may be reckoned absolutely infinite. Or, like the figures in a kaleidoscope,—where the same colours always exist, though diversely compounded and disposed at each turn of the instrument,—man's spiritual state is so varied and diverse in different individuals, that it were not easy even to classify them under any general divisions. Or, like the windings of a mountain stream, always descending, but still wandering hither and thither in a way that seems sluggish or capricious, the hidden life is always tending to the one great goal —Jehovah, and his eternal favour; while yet it winds and wanders with so many peculiarities, that even the general laws which guide it cannot be easily deduced. The spiritual culture is not like the artificial figures which we sometimes see in the gardens of foreign lands, where nature is trimmed into art by a perverted taste, and where plants are made to assume the form of birds

and of beasts. On the contrary, "God's husbandry" leaves the soul free to expatiate at large amid diversities which are endless, or to indulge the tastes, which may be as various as the subjects of converting grace. The tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruit every month; and this may be viewed as emblematic of the varieties of Christian experience—the phases of the life that is hid with Christ in God. "The fears, the hopes, the remembrances, the anticipations, the inward and outward experiences, the belief and the faith of a Christian, form of themselves a philosophy and a sum of knowledge, which a life spent in the groves of Academus or the painted Porch could not have attained or collected." *

Nor is it difficult to account for this diversity. The mental constitution of no two men is perfectly alike, and hence there is a basis in nature for all the varieties which appear. Where the mind is constitutionally prone to melancholy and depression, as in the case of David Brainerd, we may expect one phase of Christian experience—the dejected and self-condemned. Where the mental constitution is buoyant, joyous, elastic, as in the case of Dr William Gordon of Hull, we may expect that personal religion will generally appear in sunshine, serene and unclouded, because direct and unembarrassed in its actings. Where the mind is by constitution grave and sedate—where judgment and reason preponderate over fancy or the sentiments, as in the case of President Edwards, we may expect to find Christian experience calm, collected, and strong, firm in its texture and steadfast in its convictions—not like Reuben, "unstable as water;" but like Judah, "thy father's children shall bow down before thee." Where the mind is by constitution signalized by indomitable will and intense concentration of character, as in the case of Dr Chalmers, we may expect that on that basis there will be raised a Christian experience pervaded by a resoluteness which no opposition can quell, no difficulties repress, and no

* Coleridge.

attainments satisfy or soothe into supineness. And so of all the diverse shades of mental constitution.

But diversities in natural temperament or mental structure will not explain all the peculiarities which meet us when studying the experience of Christians. The Scriptures make it clear, by the examples of David the king, of Amos the herdman of Tekoa, of Peter the fisherman, and of Paul the Pharisee, that their mental peculiarities form the basis of the distinction between believer and believer; but there is another influential agency which must be taken into account. According to the manner in which the soul passed from death to life—from darkness to light—may we expect its future career to be. When the hidden life began—when the birth from above took place—did the soul make the transition through terror, like that of Sinai, which made it exceedingly fear and quake? That will occasion a peculiarity in its experience through all its earthly career, such as we witness in the case of John Bunyan or Dr Love. Did it calmly emerge from the darkness of nature to the sunlight of grace? That also will stamp a peculiarity on the soul's experience, as in the case perhaps of Philip Melancthon. Did the soul pass, it scarce knew how, from the bondage of sin and the grasp of Satan to the liberty of the sons of God? That will lead to another manifestation of the spiritual life. Was the change clear, sharp, and decided? Then we find the whole future course partaking of that character, and such Christians are sometimes harshly intolerant of those who have not made a similar transition. Was the soul deeply humbled? Was it long like the bruised reed? Did wearisome days and sleepless nights pass over it, before it could surrender itself as a sinner to the sinner's Friend? That also, as in the case of Thomas Halyburton or Dr Chalmers, imparts a specialty to the hidden life. Or, to name no more,—Was the transition accompanied with melting views of the Saviour's compassion, and humbling views of our character as sinners against him? That also occasions another aspect of the

hidden man of the heart—he lives and breathes forth love to the Saviour, and to all who are his. In a word, according to our experience at our conversion, is our experience through life. Our faith will grow simpler and stronger; our repentance will wax deeper, because more evangelical; our love will become more constraining, because fed more constantly out of the great reservoir that supplies us all—the love of Christ; but, withal, the impress stamped on us at conversion will go with us through life in all its leading features; and when the ransomed of the Lord shall at last cast their crowns at his feet, it will be done no doubt as the one Spirit taught, but also as the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, had learned.

Even this, however, is not reaching the full explanation of the subject before us. Ere we can attain to satisfaction regarding the diversities of Christian experience, we must very specially consider the sovereignty of the Spirit, who works according to his pleasure. As no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost,* he must begin the work in all our minds; and as he does it in infinite wisdom, so in infinite diversity. He puts forth the transforming energy on us all severally as he will. Though there be but one Spirit, there are diversities of gifts, and that scriptural fact is never to be overlooked. It is common to notice the mental peculiarities of the unconverted soul perpetuated by the converting Spirit—they are rectified, adjusted, and hallowed, but not organically altered. He that was courageous is courageous still. He that was timid is timid still. He that was gentle, and meek, and lowly, is made meek and lowly more and more. The Paul who appealed so boldly to the kings and rulers before whom he pled, even till they quaked, and almost believed, was the same Paul who hailed men and women to prison because they embraced the religion of God, and rejected the perversions of men. There *are* cases in which the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit is otherwise

* 1 Cor. xii. 3.

displayed. We sometimes see him who was bold and resolute before his conversion, transformed into one that is gentle and meek by that decisive change, so that the laws and speculations of men are often traversed by the divine procedure; here, as every where, we are taught to be still and know that he is God; but, ordinarily, man converted is, in constitution and in tendency, the same as man unconverted. The difference is, that holiness has taken the place of sin, and eternity that of time, and God that of man.

There are some, however, who overlook these diversities of gifts and operations. They would prescribe one unvarying formula for conversion in every case. There is the excitement—the alarm—the days, perhaps the weeks and months, of anxiety, when the bread of tears must be eaten—and only after all these will some concede that conversion has taken place. Regeneration, without throes and anguish, is not regarded as regeneration at all. But, far from sympathizing in such a sentiment, we fear it must be argued that all such fears, and throes, and anguish, if they arise from delay in coming to Christ, are but sins in disguise, the result of unbelief, not of the Spirit's saving work. Surely the instant that God commands, the sinner should obey; and this is his commandment, that we should believe upon his Son. The instant that God promises, we should believe—and his promises bespangle the spiritual firmament like stars in the midnight sky. The instant that God threatens, we should fear, and flee to the hiding-place from the storm, the covert from the tempest. The men of Nineveh, who repented the instant that Jonah preached, should be our model here. Till that be done, the soul is in jeopardy every moment, and the gospel therefore makes no provision for a moment's delay, or hesitancy, or faltering. Now—to-day—while God is stretching out his hand—we are to regard. No preparatory training is needed—no intervening period of anguish—no self-derived fitness, or worth, or adjustment. *Now*—and *as we are*—these are the divine

terms—terms which make it so plain, that the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err regarding the character of the gospel's offer, the gospel's invitation, or the gospel's rich, free provision of mercy. It is as immediate as it is full and free to sinners.

And this being the case, it is alike unphilosophical and irreligious to prescribe any uniform course or process, through which men shall pass from death in sin to life in righteousness—that life which is hid with Christ in God. It is to the labouring that the invitations are addressed—and that we all are. It is to the heavy-laden that the call is sent—to those who are spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which does not profit. All by nature belong to that class; and the only question which man may legitimately ask when the Holy One invites, is, How may I most speedily obey?—How most alertly go when he says come?—How most simply comply when he either enjoins, or directs, or encourages? It is this that brings an instant salvation to a needy sinner; and all the prescriptions which would warrant us to delay for a breath to come to Christ, are the results of man's perverse ingenuity—his systematizing—his legalism—his unconscious struggles after self-salvation, not of the glorious gospel of the grace of God.

But there is one aspect of diversity to which we have not yet referred—the diversity that may be found in the same soul at different times. At one period, it is energetic and vigorous in its spiritual condition; at another, it is dull, sluggish, and inactive. To-day it lives upon its watch-tower, and no enemy gains an advantage; to-morrow, nay, perhaps, before the sun goes down, it is dreaming fast asleep. Now, it is like the chariots of Amminadab—it rejoices like a strong man to run a race; anon, it lies like a dismantled wreck upon the waters, scarcely worth dragging to the shore. Who has not witnessed these transitions, these fitful vicissitudes? Many who began their voyage full of promise, so as to elicit the thanksgivings of those who

loved them, have gradually made shipwreck of the faith; and, if they have not sunk to rise no more, it is only because none can pluck them from the Father's hand. They are sickly, and pining, and withered—bearing no fruit unto holiness, and gathering in no glory to the Redeemer. Like Ephraim, "they are a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured their strength, and they know it not; yea, grey hairs are here and there upon them, yet they know it not." Surely to such the address is made—"Arise; call upon thy God." "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "Repent and do thy first works." "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." "It is easy," said one of the puritans, "to be a saint of the earth—a state saint, a designing saint, nay, a church saint; but to hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end, requires the omnipotence of grace, and the very unchangeableness of God."

CHAPTER XII.

The Wanderings of Israel a Type of the Believer's.

"When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out from the land of bondage came,
Her fathers' God before her moved,—
An awful guide in smoke and flame.

By day along the astonished land
The cloudy pillar glided slow;
By night, Arabia's crimson sand
Returned the fiery column's glow.
* * *
Be present still, though now unseen
When brightly shines the prosperous day;
Be thoughts of thee a cloudy screen,
To temper the deceitful ray."

SCOTT.

The Wanderings of Israel, a Type of the Believer's.

The principle—Its use—Its abuse—Examples—The Exodus—The Red Sea—Marah—Elim—Zin—The manna—Sinai—The pillar of cloud and fire—Meribah—The spies—The forty years—The promised land possessed.

THE most cursory observer has noticed that there are strange coincidences between the wanderings of the children of Israel, in the great wilderness, and those of the believer through this world to a better. Perhaps it would not be easy to find a simpler mode of exhibiting the Christian's experience, than just to trace the different stages, from the exodus from Egypt, and the crossing of the Red Sea, to the sending out of the spies, the crossing of the Jordan, and taking possession of the typical land which flowed with milk and honey. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." They were Προχηρύγματα τῶν κατα Χρίστου, and have often ministered to the edification of his people.

No doubt, this analogy or type has been carried too far, and men have found parallels which existed only in their own fervent fancies. The encampment at Dophkah, for example, has been viewed as indicating, by the meaning of the word, that the Hebrews were there *beaten and rendered pliant;* and many lessons have been deduced from that interpretation. The encamp-

ment at Alush, which word means to *knead* or *leaven*, has been supposed to teach that there the pilgrim fathers of the Old Testament church were made to cleave closely and compactly together. The encampment at Hazeroth, or *the outer courts*, is alleged to indicate that the myriads of Israel were then on the borders of the promised land. Rimmon-parez, *the divided pomegranate*, is supposed to suggest a striking emblem of the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh, because of the blood-red hue of that fruit when cut open. Libnah means being made *white*, and that is alleged to furnish another emblem. Rissah, which means *sprinkling*, is made to point to the blood of atonement. Kehelathah signifies *congregation*, and there, it is supposed, "the people assembled in larger or smaller companies, sang, prayed, edified, comforted, encouraged, instructed, and warned each other."* This mode of interpretation is applied to all the stations at which the Hebrews are known to have halted throughout their forty years; and many parallels are found to the believer's experience, whether in joy or in sorrow, in progress or declension, under the chastening hand or the sunshine smile of Jehovah.

It is true, one cannot but feel that the lessons deduced from such coincidences belong to the region of the fanciful, rather than the soundly scriptural, or the solidly edifying; yet, at the same time, there are unquestionably some manifest resemblances between the Hebrew movements and the Christian's life on earth; and it may help to extend our acquaintance with God's dealings with the soul of man, if we consider a few of these in connection with a believer's experience. The divine idea regarding the spiritual life may thus become more explicit, and the believer's Shekinah be the more glorified on that account.

The Exodus, then, is one of the most memorable events which the history of the world contains. That pastoral

* See Israel's Wanderings in the Wilderness, by the Rev. G. D. Krummacher.

tribes should often strike their tents, and roam from scene to scene, is not surprising; it was common thousands of years ago, and it is common still. But that the myriads of a nation should all at once remove from the land where they had lived for centuries, that two or three millions of souls should start on such an errand, and in such a way as that of the Hebrews from Egypt, is an event unparalled in all that we know of man. And that there is something more than a vague analogy between that exodus and the believer's setting out from the Egypt of the world, we are perhaps forewarned by the words, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Were the children of Israel long goaded and oppressed by their taskmasters? Is not the sinner the same while he continues the slave of sin? Did they often sigh and cry for deliverance before they knew whence it could come? Poor sin-laden man does the same;—though ignorant of the cause of his misery, or reluctant to acknowledge it, he is often constrained to ask, Who will show us any good? Were long years of oppression needed before the people could be prepared for Jehovah's wondrous purposes concerning them? Even so, before man will consent to forsake the house of his spiritual bondage, wo after wo, and calamity after calamity must come. Had it not been for the heavy burdens, and the bricks without straw of Egypt, the Hebrews might have lived and died in that land; and were it not for the tears and tribulations, the burden greater than we can bear, the exactions and oppressions of the world, many a child of God would continue to linger in Egypt, till he became a partaker of its plagues.

And then, after having set forth from Rameses and taken the way of the Red Sea, what difficulties still lay across the path of the Hebrews! For a time all seemed prosperous. Not a dog bayed; their very enemies helped them on their way, and they marched amid silence deep as death to be free. But soon their troubles began. With rocks on the right hand, and rocks on the left, with Pharaoh and his pursuing

squadrons behind, and the Red Sea in front, how are they to escape? Is not their joy about to be turned into weeping? True, their extremity was God's opportunity; but in the mean time, to the Hebrew eye there is nothing visible amid the profound darkness of their prospect but death.

And is it not often so with the child of God? When he begins to think of following the Lord, and forsaking the house of his bondage, all, for a time, may seem to promise easy success or yield abundant joy. Enemies are not let loose. If they exist, they seem to be restrained, and the young inquirer proceeds on his way rejoicing. Anon, however, difficulties arise. The frown of a parent, or the repulse of a master—the enticement of a friend, or the deceitfulness of his own heart—the world without, or Satan spreading his snares over the very soul—all seem to threaten his overthrow; so that Pharaoh and his host did not appear more formidable to the children of Israel, than these united antagonists sometimes appear to the young and inexperienced inquirer.

But if the Lord have begun a good work, he will carry it on. If he have a purpose of mercy to a soul, he will perfect what concerns it. Is the Red Sea before? It must open up and form a way, with a wall of water on either side, for the redeemed to pass through. Is Pharaoh behind? He may pursue—he will pursue, but it will be to his own destruction, not to the injury of those whom he regarded as his easy prey; he himself shall sink like lead in the water, while they escape like a bird from the snare of the fowler, and their song of praise will then be dedicated to "Him who is the Rock, and whose work is perfect."

But "in the world ye shall have tribulation," is the assurance of the only-wise God, and that assurance never yet was falsified. For a time the believer who has passed from death to life, from darkness to light, rejoices in his freedom—a full tide of joy for a season pours through his soul. But by and by persecution or

trials arise, and now the waters of Marah must be tasted or drained. Parched in a dry and thirsty land—worn out amid the burdens of a journey, where he is but a pilgrim and a stranger, his heart is like to melt within him. And perhaps, when he expected rest and refreshment, he finds an increase of labour and of sorrow. What promised once to be a fountain of joy is found to be a source of disappointment. He begins perhaps to murmur and wonder if this be the path of pleasantness and peace, and it is probably long before he learns how wise and good it is that we are made to bear the yoke in our youth. No doubt the merciful Lord has a tree at hand which can turn the bitter waters into sweetness, so that even the trial ministers to the joy of the soul; but, while it lasts, it is a bitter disappointment to find that wo is the soul's portion, when it expected refreshment and repose—that in passing from Egypt to Canaan, we only change our sorrow, instead of entering, as we had dreamt, upon our rest.

But the Lord is not slack concerning his promises; and after Marah we soon reach Elim, with its palms and its plenty of water. We have joy and gladness now, according to the days in which we have seen grief. Is the believer in his Zionward journey assailed by some tribulation? That is not because the Lord has forgotten to be gracious, but because our joys are sweetened when trials go before them. Is that believer plunged into despair at the very moment when he expected not merely hope but fruition? That is not because our Father loves to see us weep, or to hear us moan, but because tribulation is the way to the kingdom—discipline alone makes wise—the cross precedes the crown—tearing up by the ploughshare prepares the way for seedtime, and summer, and autumn. Elim, with its palm-groves and brooks, is twice an Elim, after Marah and its bitterness, as the gourd was precious to Jonah when he would not abide in the palaces of Nineveh.

Or, farther, man's life on earth is at the best chequered and precarious, and as a type or an emblem of the

believer's life, the journeyings of the Hebrews were signally so. After leaving Elim, it was not long ere they entered on the wilderness of Zin—its name means *a thorn* or a brier—and amid its entanglements or lacerations, bread began to fail. It was wo coming upon wo, and seemed more than flesh and blood could bear. Even Egypt now appeared a land of luxury and of plenty, compared with that dreary desert; and the hearts of the people rose in revolt against their God and their leader. "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full! for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill the whole assembly with hunger." Now, has it not been often so, when God had allured his people into the wilderness? Have not some, under the pressure, gone back for a season to the world, and tried to find something there which might supply what God and religion seemed unable to afford? So true to human nature are the Hebrew murmurings in the wilderness of Zin, that perhaps never one redeemed soul ever journeyed Zionward amid the cares and trials and anxieties of earth, without indulging in similar lamentations at some stage of the way. Man's rebellion must be tamed, man's pride subdued, man's heart unmasked; and to accomplish these results, God in his wisdom, his mercy, and his love leads us by ways which we do not know—often rough, and steep, and thorny—to the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The Manna—that mysterious food—whose very mysteriousness gave rise to its name—what is it?—may furnish another illustration—nay, many—of the believer's pilgrimage and his treatment by the way. How is his soul sustained? By the bread of life which cometh down from heaven. How is it to be received? From day to day, even as the bread which nourishes the body. Can the food of the soul be stored up, so that we may become independent of God for a time? Nay, as soon as we attempt to gather more than is needed

for the day, it becomes a source of sorrow. And thus it is with the wayfarer in the heavenward path, as with the Hebrew in his journey from Rameses to Jerusalem. He is fed from God's open hand. The hidden manna —grace—is imparted hour by hour. Our God supplies all the believer's need. As his day is, so is his strength. He is kept constantly dependent, but as constantly provided for—unless he forsake the Author of every good and every perfect gift.

But, amid this abundant provision, and the happiness which it brings, Sinai rears its granite peaks, and the thunder and the lightning which made the Hebrew myriads fear and quake are heard and seen. Need we tarry to tell how significant that is as regards the life of a believer? How often is he obliged to dwell in the shadow of Sinai, even though Calvary be in view? He has consented to sin. He may have crossed the Red Sea, or been converted, but he has been tampering again with the abominable thing; and unless the conscience be of new given over to searedness, that reawakens the echoes of Sinai: the soul, at least, can hear them, and it is never safe till it has sought again the shadow of the Rock that is higher than we. To linger about Sinai, under any pretence, is to retard our entrance upon Canaan—it may retard it for ever; but when its terrors are heard, do we flee to Him who is the end of the law for righteousness? Then we dwell safely beneath his shadow, and the Lord our Righteousness is found to be indeed the Prince of Peace.

And again, when those echoes of Sinai have been heard, and when the soul is perplexed and in despair, how blessed to see the pillar of cloud and of fire guiding to the spot where hope and safety are in store! The Hebrews had that pillar—they had the glorious Shekinah to guide them—and what is the counterpart to these in the life of a believer? The Word and Spirit of God are his pillar of cloud and fire. A light more steady beams there for him. A meaning more comprehensive is deciphered there; and thus light is sown

for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. "There were Christians before there were Jews!" That is true; but both Christians now and Jews of old may rejoice in the guidance of Him who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all.

Or, next, the waters of strife at Meribah furnish another analogy to the believer's experience and life. Renewed trials come, and renewed murmurs arise—for men forget that when they murmur they are striving with God as certainly as the children of Israel did. Oh, how painful is it for men to submit to the most reasonable of all rules, and say: "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven!" How hard is it to break and subdue the wayward heart of man! How difficult to be still and know that God is God! Pharaoh's language revolts us, and yet we all act upon it—"Who is the Lord that I should obey him?"

The spies sent out, and all the consequences which followed, furnish another parallel between the Hebrew wanderings and the Christian life. Faith is sent on before us. It brings clusters from Eshcol, and foretastes of blessedness beyond what tongue can tell; for it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Yet oh, how often does it happen that doubts, and surmisings, and questionings arise! There are giants in the land—there is a lion in the way—we shall one day perish—these are some of the objections raised in the very spirit of the Jews, by those who would walk by sight, and not by faith—who would first *see* and then *believe*—that is, who would reverse the heavenly maxim, "Believe and thou shalt see."

Or again, the long protracted wanderings of the Hebrews, extending over a period of nearly forty years, furnish a remarkable emblem of the believer's journey to the city of our God. That protracted period of time was required by the children of Israel to travel across a peninsula which may be traversed in as many hours. And trace their history on a map, and the eye will see that after the lapse of weeks, or months, or years, the "tribes of the wandering foot" have not advanced a

mile, nay, they have retreated. By circuitous routes, as if they were at pains to wander, they cross and recross their own line of march. Their movement is zig-zag, and it is scarcely too much to say, that they stagger to and fro like a drunken man. And, O how apt is this as an emblem of the believer's life! He takes years to acquire what might be acquired in a day, were he simple and therefore strong in the faith. To-day he learns, to-morrow he unlearns. Now he acquires, anon he loses. At present he is on the rock; forthwith he is in the fearful pit and the miry clay. If he moves, it is rather in a circle than a straight line; and it is only by the grace of God that he does not utterly draw back to perdition.

But, lastly, he does enter Canaan. Though myriads have perished in the wilderness, the purpose of God stands sure, and his promise is performed. The wilderness is behind—the Jordan is crossed, and the land flowing with milk and honey is possessed. Now, this tells of the close of the Zionward pilgrim's career. It proves that God's promises are all yea and amen. Men might weep as they went, but they reach their home at last. They who, like Caleb and Joshua, follow the Lord fully, will enjoy the heavenly inheritance, where types, and shadows, and emblems all give place to the one grand reality—God—a covenant God in Christ. And such is a glimpse at the journeyings of Israel, as an emblem of the journeyings of the believer. Is it not true that the one Spirit is in the Bible of a truth? Was not Augustine right when he said: "Novum Testamentum in Vetere *latet;* Vetus in Novo *patet?*" "The Scriptures of the Old Testament are all ours," said Dr Owen, "with all things contained in them. The sins of the people are recorded in them for our warning; their obedience for our example; and God's dealing with them on the account of the one and the other for our direction and encouragement in believing. We are not to look on them barely as stories of things that are past, but as things directly and peculiarly ordered in the wise and holy counsel of God, for our use and advantage."

CHAPTER XIII.

The Divided Heart.

"Oh, loved, but not enough, though dearer far
Than self and all its fond enjoyments are;
None duly loves Thee, but who, nobly free
From earthly objects, finds his all in Thee.

Glory to God! Thou Stranger here below,
Whom man not knows, nor feels a wish to know:
Our faith and reason are both shocked to find
Man in the pest of honour,—God behind."

MADAME GUYON.

The Divided Heart.

Religious decision—The reverse of it common—The reasons—The case of Augustine—M'Cheyne—Chalmers—Lady Colquhoun—Macdonald.

SOME of the strongest language in the Word of God is employed on the subject of religious decision. From the days of Moses, when it was written, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live"—to those of Elijah, when it was said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him"—this subject has been pressed upon men. From the time of Elijah to that of the Redeemer, who said with so much earnestness, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad"—and "if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"—sinners have thus been warned. From the days of the Redeemer on the earth to those of Paul, who said with an emphasis which it is wonderful that any can overlook, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"—much of the Bible's aim and urgency is directed to make man decided; either cold

or hot; either an enemy or an ally; either one who can be trusted, or a detected antagonist, though wearing the guise of a friend.

Yet, in spite of these reiterated calls, many continue to think that it is possible to combine what the Teacher sent from God pronounces to be utterly incompatible—the love of the world with the love of the Father, or the friendship of the world with the friendship of God. It is made plain on the supreme authority that he hates a divided heart. He demands, and he deserves it all; and it will repay a careful study, if we inquire into that condition of the soul in which such compromises are attempted, when the fear and the favour of man combine to impede our progress.

It is not wonderful though men who are not renewed by the Spirit of God should attempt to combine the brass, the iron, and the clay. They do not know the utter and essential antagonism which exists between the spirit of the world and the things of God. They have never been able to discern that the one is destructive of the other. With only one principle reigning in their soul—the principle of allegiance to their natural depravity—they feel no incongruity between the service of God and the service of Mammon—they do not know that the former implies that spiritual conflict amid which Paul groaned, and in which every believer must engage. The conflict between the flesh and the Spirit,* is indeed a thing unknown. Like a withered leaf, they glide down the stream, never discerning the strength of the current, because they do not attempt to stem it; they are borne easily along, fearing no evil, though the second death is at hand; and all this is natural and easily explained, in the case of men unrenewed in the spirit of their mind.

But the instructive consideration is, that even after the Spirit of God has begun to move upon the soul, and evolve order from the chaos which sin has occasioned there, men often try to combine what the God of truth pronounces to be as mutually destructive as we know an

* Gal. v. 17.

acid and alkali to be. It is long before they discover the absolute antagonism which exists between the things of the Spirit and the things of man's sinful nature; and even after conviction of sin has been produced—nay, we may go farther, and say, though the remark may be perverted, even after the work of conversion has commenced—attempts are often made to combine pursuits which never can amalgamate. The following examples will best illustrate and guard what we mean.

Among the men called the ancients, Augustine, who was rescued by grace from deep moral degradation, and raised to a pre-eminent height of spiritual grandeur, will supply our first illustration. The mercy of God had reached him, and restored his soul again. He had discovered what hindered him from enjoying God. According to his own "Confessions," he had seen the worthlessness, or the proper place of the creature, apart from the Creator. He knew that Christ alone was the way of salvation. He had discovered truth in the Word of God, and abandoned Plato, Cicero, and his former heathen masters, for the study of that Word. Yet, amid all these things, though they separated Augustine, not merely in degree or by some shades, but vitally and essentially, from his former self, he complains of his tendency to blend what could not be blended. He had "two wills," he says, "the one old, the other new; the one carnal, the other spiritual: they strove between themselves, and by their discord weakened the soul." * "He was divided between the two," he says, "but leant more to what he approved than what he condemned." "He was thus pressed," he continues, "by a load which he could not shake off. When he would meditate on God, his efforts were like those of one who desired to awake, but who, nevertheless, sank back, overpowered by the spirit of slumber." He felt that "the law of sin was just the force of custom by which the mind (of one renewed) is dragged, and bound against his will, and deservedly so, for he had willingly conformed to that law. To such

* See Augustini Confessiones, lib. viii. cap. 5.

an extent did these convictions on one occasion rise, that he struggled against the law in his members with the power of a strong passion. "His forehead, his cheeks, his eyes, his colour, and the tones of his voice, proclaimed the workings of his mind, even more than his words could do." * In a paroxysm of weakness, the soul that struggled to be free exclaimed, "How long? how long? To-morrow and to-morrow? Why not now? Why not terminate my degradation this very hour?" At length, however, he was emancipated; and when he reflected on his past sins and struggles, he saw how he had been trying to combine what in the nature of things could not be united—that is, the love of God and of the world at once; his whole future life became a comment on his own deep words—"Bona mea instituta tua sunt, et dona tua; mala mea delicta mea sunt, et judicia tua .... et hymnus et fletus adscendunt in conspectum tuum."—Thy ordinances and thy gifts are my good; my sins are my misery, as they are thy judgments upon me—and praise and lamentation thus ascend together to thee.

In every age we have specimens of similar indecision, and of labour and sorrow in its train. In the life of the saintly M'Cheyne, we read that, "At first the light dawned slowly; so slowly that, for a considerable time, he still relished an occasional plunge into scenes of gaiety. Even after he had entered the Divinity Hall, he could be persuaded to indulge in lighter pursuits, at least during the two first years of his attendance; but it was with growing alarm. When hurried away by such worldly joys, I find him writing thus: 'May there be few such records as this in my biography.' Then, 'A thorn in my side—much torment.' As the unholiness of his pleasures became more apparent, he writes, 'March 10, 1832.—I hope never to play cards again.' 'March 25.—Never visit on a Sunday evening again.' 'April 10.—Absented myself from the dance; upbraidings ill to bear. But I must try to bear the cross.' To us, who

* Augustini Confessiones, lib. viii. cap. 8.

can look at the results," his biographer writes, "it appears probable that the Lord permitted him thus to try many broken cisterns, and to taste the wormwood of many earthly streams, in order that, in after days, by the side of the Fountain of living waters, he might point to the world he had for ever left, and testify the surpassing preciousness of what he had now found."*

It was thus that the world for a time kept its hold of a mind which was eventually to triumph over all its fascinations. Intertwined as it is in a thousand ways with man's heart-strings, only Omnipotent grace can untwine it, and enable the believer to say, that "greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world;" or, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is profoundly instructive, for it leads us far into the dark depths of the heart, to know that even M'Cheyne clung to the world till grace drove it away.

Nor can such tendencies be explained by any supposed gentleness in man's nature, or his mere reluctance to offend. The boldest and most resolute have yielded to their power, as well as the most plastic or impressible. Who more heroic than Chalmers? Who more prepared than he to combat an opponent, and that with a mastery and a power, which, prior to his conversion, gave presage of his future grandeur, as, after that change, it exalted him, as a defender of the faith, to a pinnacle which few have ever reached? Yet even he was for a time timid and averse to decision, or at least not always decided as a follower of Christ. Even he complains that he was tempted to evade some duties by stratagem rather than carry them out with simple-minded firmness and resolution. The man who had braved a university, in defence of his professional character, shrank or became timid for a time, when certain exhibitions of the Christian character were required. In his diaries we read of his constant conflict with himself, as thus yielding to the world, and of the encroachments which the old man was ever making on the new. "A trying sub-

* Life of M'Cheyne, p. 19.

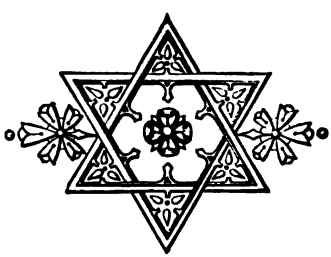
ject," he says of some temptation, "for the exercise of patience and heroism. Let me feel the importance, nay, even grandeur, of the contest with myself. . . . . May I never suffer the anxieties of a petty and perishable world to withdraw me from the duties and the contemplations of religion." "Have to thank God for giving me courage to go through the exercise of family worship" (when a neighbouring clergyman was present). "In the expectation of Mr Edie remaining with me all night, I was unmanly enough to look forward with cowardice to family worship." These and similar records enable us to understand that even this gigantic intellect, or this vehement spirit, could not control the power of indwelling sin, or his tendencies to halt between two opinions. The world swayed him one away, the truth of God another; and though the former was resisted and prayed against, we can yet easily trace its dangerous and obstructive power in the training through which his soul passed on the way to glory.

We see the same thing exemplified in the life of John Macdonald, of Lady Colquhoun, of Sir Andrew Agnew, and nearly all who have passed from death to life. The first of these, even after he had been stirred to earnestness about his soul, had reason to write as follows:—"Last night, was at the Mason Ball given in the Lodge here. How much the mind is influenced by present circumstances in forming an opinion! For instance, when I was in the ball-room, had I been asked my opinion of such a meeting, I am sure it would have been most favourable. I daresay I would have thought nothing more delightful than a ball. But when I returned home at night, and threw myself on my bed, I began to reflect how I had spent the evening. The excitation of the spirits was then gone, and the verdict was most unfavourable." And yet again, after he had made some progress in divine knowledge, he says:—"In the evening, went to the Academy Ball at Elgin, but never enjoyed any thing less. I was sick of it—sick of all the silliness I saw and was forced to act. I feel my mind

becoming more and more dissatisfied with such things. I have no enjoyment in them. A flash of another world will sometimes strike upon me in the midst of the gay dissipation, and my thoughts go off a-moralising." And yet that was the man who had previously prayed, "O that my eyes were opened—that I were born again into a new world of vision!" That was the man who had exclaimed with earnestness, as if his heart were speaking, "O Lord, look on me in mercy! Remove the source of my depravity, change my heart, give me a right spirit; and then at last 'the desert shall blossom as the rose.'" In other words, he sought to retain this world, while preparing for the next. He thus retarded the period of his conversion. He tried to give the one hand to God and the other to frivolity; and, in doing so, exemplified that resistless tendency which rules in man, to seek that in the creature, which can be found only in God—that in the phantoms or the shadows of an hour, which can be secured only by securing the fulness of joy, the pleasures which are for evermore—that, in brief, in hardening the heart against the beseeching voice of God, which can be found only in applying the heart to wisdom as that voice directs.

But we need not further illustrate this point. The tendency to discover some border territory, where the old man may be spared a little, is epidemic, and perhaps all who have made the transition from death in sin, to life in holiness, have attempted, for a season, to reconcile the interests of time and folly with those of eternity and wisdom. But a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways; and his ever multiplying disappointments may well warn us not to walk in his footsteps. The world is sufficiently decided in its pursuits; why should the believer falter in his? The prince of the power of the air has willing vassals; why should the Lord of life be served with half a heart? Deathbeds put to flight for ever all that the world pursues as pleasure; why not substitute for it at once the pleasures which endure for evermore? "My son, give me thine heart"—"What thy

hands find to do, do it with all thy might"—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"—these are Scriptures which at once summon us to decision, and indicate its intensity. He that is wise will act upon the warning.



CHAPTER XIV.

The Young Convert—His Experience.

"My mind was so turned, that it lay, like a horse-leech at the vein, still crying out, 'Give, give,' so fixed upon eternity, and the things about the kingdom of heaven . . . . . that neither pleasures, nor profits, nor persuasions, nor threats could make it let go its hold; and though I speak it with shame, yet it is a certain truth, it would then have been as difficult for me to have taken my mind from heaven to earth, as I have found it often since to get it again from earth to heaven."—JOHN BUNYAN.

The Young Convert—His Experience.

Mistakes—Narrow views of young Christians—The reason—An example—Rev. Henry Watson Fox—Winning souls to Christ—The scrupulous Christian—His perplexities and deliverance.

THE first dawning perception of the way of salvation—the first moment at which the love of God in Christ is felt in the soul—sometimes produces a joy which enables us to know by foretaste the blessedness of the redeemed spirit when it shall awake from the dream of this life to the realities and the ecstasies of the life to come. The vividness with which the things of the Spirit are then sometimes presented to the soul, and the freshness of the whole scheme of redemption, emerging as it now does from darkness into light, bring enjoyments to the young convert, which enable him to understand better, perhaps, than he can do at some more advanced stages of his journey, what the fulness of joy, the pleasures which are for evermore, shall be.

Yet there is often mixed up with these joys much that is crude and imperfect; for the blessedness which some young believers feel, is often based upon inexperience or ignorance, rather than accurate knowledge. The zeal of young converts has passed into a proverb, but the same distinction is not bestowed on their knowledge. Let us glance, then, at some of the peculiarities which may be observed in the souls of men, when just awakening from the stupor of nature. The young Christian may be a hoary-headed man, as well as a little

child; but let us contemplate some of the aspects in which incipient personal religion is presented—religion when it ceases to be ideal, traditional, or delusive, and becomes real, living, and divine.

It is not unusual to find the young Christian rashly alleging that there can be few living believers in the entire universe of God. When that Christian first discovers what is implied in being a believer indeed, and can measure the wide gulf which separates man by nature from man by grace, he is not easily persuaded that very many have shot that gulf. He can remember, with the vividness of yesterday's events, his own death in sin. He knows the utter indifference which he lately felt as to spiritual things. Or, perhaps his recollections take the shape of the most resolute Phariseeism, when the soul was lulled into a death-like repose by the cry, "We be Abraham's children, and never were in bondage to any man." Or, different from all these, the young Christian's memory perhaps points to the time when he not merely lived without God, and without caring for eternity or the soul; but moreover plunged into all that could immerse his mind in ever-deepening spiritual gloom. There was perhaps gross sin committed —there was conscience with its faithful admonitions despised—there was eternity perilled, without a moment's compunction, for things which perished in the using. Now, the recollection of all these things assures the young Christian that it is no easy transition—and not often made—between spiritual darkness and spiritual light—between the death of the soul and the life which the Spirit creates. He at least understands why the Saviour said, "Few there be that enter by the strait gate." He has found out the meaning of the words, "When the Son of man cometh, will he find faith on the earth?" and, influenced by all this, the young Christian often hastens to the conclusion that there can be few Christians indeed—few really converted—few who follow Christ at the expense of hating father and mother, sister and brother. Hence frequent harsh judg-

ments of others—hence the broad basis of sectarianism—hence the spirit which dictated the words to the disciples of old, "We forbade them (to do miracles in Christ's name), because they follow not with us."

We have had to deal with such a soul, and learned some lessons from the experience which it taught. The man had travelled in many lands, and rioted in sin in them all. According to his own graphical descriptions, he had belonged avowedly to that multitudinous sect whose leading maxim is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." He had graduated in guilt through various stages; and began, as he described, by effacing his early religious impressions by reading the Scottish novels. Then he proceeded to Sabbath-breaking—for the works which he read sneered at Sabbath sanctity. Then he began to frequent theatres. Then the haunts of lowest profligacy—to which the theatre is the vestibule, or rather the temple—were his retreats. Variety was next sought in foreign parts—till at last a shattered frame, prostrated by excess, compelled his retirement from all his former haunts, and it was then that the keen edge of truth began to be felt. Deserted by his former associates, or compelled to abandon them, conscience began to claim its lawful supremacy. It asserted the prerogatives of God, and demanded the homage of the guilty man. Nor could he now resist the claim; and, as far as man could judge his brother, that wanderer's heart was changed, and old things passed away. But one remarkable peculiarity was observable in his experience. So amazing did the change seem to him, that he could not be persuaded it had occurred in almost any case besides. Bunyan's example, he thought, came nearest to his own; and he never questioned that Bunyan was a believer. John Newton's case was also parallel with that of C——'s, and neither did he question his conversion; but, with these two exceptions, this young Christian could for a time scarcely be convinced that any had been converted in modern times at all. The most zealous ministers he

was disposed to deem lukewarm or frigid, compared with what they would be did the love of Christ really constrain them. Consistent Christians in private spheres were charged with indifferentism, because they seemed to him so little in the habit of carrying the cross. In short, all were tested by the standard of this young Christian's own experience; and because they did not tally with that, as face answers to face in a glass, he for a length of time questioned whether they were believers at all. A mind of some native vigour, and a heart capable of deep emotion or of strong passion, combined their energies to depict the low state of the churches, as if spiritual life had scarcely any existence there.

But there are cases far different from this. Henry Watson Fox was trained at Rugby school, and his case supplies one of the finest examples of the young Christian gently led to the Saviour. An elder sister had kindly plied the youth with instructions and entreaties, and her endeavours were not in vain in the Lord. The truth took effect; and, though there was no violent struggle, there came a decided change. Great scrupulosity and watchfulness, deep conviction of sin—accompanied, however, with some discernment of Christ's power to save from its effects—marked his conduct; and though legalism for a time mixed itself up with more spiritual perceptions, his biography makes it plain that he early entered on the path of the just, which is like the shining light.* And one peculiarity of this young Christian should be carefully noted. Not only did he at an early period, after his attention had been turned to spiritual things, dedicate himself to the service of his Redeemer as a missionary, and faithfully pay his vow even till he died in the cause—he moreover addressed himself at once to the work of winning souls to Christ in the school of Rugby. He watched and he prayed against the corrupting tendencies of such scenes;

* See a Memoir of Rev. H. W. Fox, B.A., of Wadham College, Oxford, Missionary to the Teloogoo people, South India. By Rev. George Townshend Fox, B.A., of Durham.

and pathetically deplores some of the practices which there prevail. But it was not mere lamentation—it was active exertion—which signalized this young believer; and, wherever a companion would listen to his message, he would tell, according to his light, of the Saviour's love, of the sinfulness of man, and the need of holiness if we would be happy. "I have been endeavouring," Fox writes of a boy of fourteen, when he himself was little more, "I have been endeavouring to impress on him the awfulness of his state, but he seems scarcely to care whether he is lost or saved. He understands neither heaven nor hell, nor that he is born for any other state than this—that is to say, he does not *feel* it to be the case." In another letter he says, "Whenever lately I have spoken with this boy on religious subjects, he has refused to answer questions, will not say a word on the subject, and does not attend to what I am saying. He fancies that he can serve God and mammon, and used to answer my exhortations by saying that I was 'going too far.' I have therefore," the young missionary continues, "since he refuses to listen to my conversation, determined to write out different things for him, to the best of my power, which I hope, with God's holy assistance, may be to his advantage."

Withal, however, this young Christian was not heedless of his own soul—nay, in seeking to water others he was himself refreshed. He felt, indeed, that "humility was a thing difficult to attain, and doing good from the motive of pleasing God was harder still." Yet he grew in grace. He dreaded to overdo his efforts among his school-fellows, lest he should produce the impression that religion was gloomy and morose; but he dreaded yet more to leave them unwarned in their sins. He set aside a day in the week to be "like a second Sunday," and tried "to read and think of nothing save God only," except when engaged in his necessary studies. Amid this discipline, he was able to see his sins so clearly, that "he scarcely could dare to look up to God, or to pray to him, were it not for his gracious

promises." And, as he grew in grace, he grew in his estimate of the Word of God. "I feel I have no hope from arguments," he says, regarding his dealings with his fellows at Rugby; "it is God that must open the heart." "Every instance of conversion of a sinner, seems to my eyes a complete miracle of God's working." The reluctance of his associates to listen to his pleading threw him more upon his God; and he says, "I feel that it is for the best, for it leads me to rest on God as my sole friend, and to open my heart the more to him."

Now, by such a course of training, this young disciple was prepared at last, by the grace of God given unto him, to pass away from father and mother, and best loved friends on earth, to plead the cause of Christ among Hindoos—there to practice among millions of idolaters the habits which he had learned at Rugby among the unconverted youth of England. "Every day," he says, "I see and observe the wickedness, the deeply-steeped wickedness, of those around me—of all England, of all the world—whilst only a remnant are left to serve God;" and, fired by that perception, his zeal for the glory of his Saviour consumed him at last. As his prayer was answered, that he might "more and more do *all* things for Christ's sake," so he died at the early age of thirty—literally spent in the work of winning souls to the Redeemer whom he loved.

But other examples of the young Christian are less captivating than that now submitted. When the soul first passes from death to life, it is not uncommon to see it actuated by great scrupulosity and great punctiliousness. Remembering how far it had erred, or how recklessly it had gone forward in the way of death prior to its conversion, that soul is now cautious and timid in proportion to its former thoughtlessness. A man in that condition is almost afraid to eat his daily bread, lest in doing so he should sin. The ordinary intercourse of life is perhaps to a large extent broken off. In many cases, the sphere in which God had placed the young

convert is abandoned, because of its felt temptations or its supposed dangers. It is not known that every sphere has its own difficulties. It is forgotten that, if God has placed us even in Sardis, he can sustain us there; and at the bidding of a subtle legal spirit, a voluntary humility, an unequivocal will-worship, is cherished by the soul. So strong does this tendency sometimes appear, that young Christians have often been haunted by doubts whether they should pray, because they feel that sin mingles with their prayers. Now, this is walking in fetters. It is dwelling in the shadow of Sinai. It is a soul still in the desert, or at best only crossing the Jordan. It is not the liberty which Christ imparts. It is not the freedom to which the spirit of adoption leads. It is not the gospel honoured so much as the gospel transmuted into the law.

In process of time, however, such a soul, if really touched by the Spirit of all grace, emerges from this condition. The feet are set in a large place, and the soul runs in the way of God's commandments. It is true that such a scrupulosity of mind may be indulged even till spiritual disease is formed, and a morbid frame becomes the result; or prayer may be hindered, the throne of grace forsaken, and the soul allowed to shrivel up and wither like a plant without rain or dew. But when the Spirit of God is indeed the teacher of the soul, it emerges from this doubting condition. It passes into a more evangelical state, and stands fast in the liberty with which Christ makes free. His finished work is better understood and more believingly contemplated, and in him the soul becomes complete. Indeed, it is to this point that all evangelical experience tends, namely, putting the Saviour where the Father puts him, as the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end of all. That is liberty, and all else has some mixture of bondage in it.

Such are some exhibitions of the young Christian's spiritual state. Sometimes the soul passes into great light and joy from amid the darkness of nature. At

other times it is long bewildered and perplexed; so that when the day should dawn, it is rather like the evening twilight. At yet other times, there is manifest, it may be, a slow, but withal a steady progress towards the clear light of the perfect day; and thus, according to the different operations of the one Spirit, sons and daughters are prepared for glory—the turbulence of nature is stilled by grace; its rebellion is quelled, and the day-star arises in the heart. But while we rejoice to trace these dealings of the Spirit with the soul, there is one solemn thought which cannot but force itself on our attention. As one, and another, and another, is thus weeded out from the world, and transplanted into the garden of the Lord, oh! what is happening to those who are still left behind—still at ease in the world's arms—nay, asleep in the arms of death? Is it to be ever thus with them? Unwarned by all that happens, are they resolved to die the second death? Surely they are fast hastening to a worse corruption—fast sinking into a deeper and more hopeless abyss! Or what shall we think of those who, having once given promise of better things to come, have relapsed into their native ungodliness, so that the latter end is worse than the beginning? Surely, when such men see one and another of those around them fleeing for refuge to the hope set before them, they should arise and do their first works. Surely, when they feel the power of corruption rising higher and higher, like water in the victim of dropsy, they should awake to their true condition, and seek the Fountain opened for sin. It is thus that the wanderer is reclaimed, and the polluted made pure. It is thus that hope supplants despair, that life dethrones death, that the Saviour is hailed to as our hope and joy, and the soul carried onward and upward to the dwelling-place of the Redeemed.

It is the dream of many that the Papacy is gradually improving—that it is not now what it was when its chief trod on the neck of princes, drank the blood of the saints, and ordered *Te Deums* over dragonades and mas-

sacres. It is the fond notion of some that the world is improving; and the time is anticipated, by the sanguine but the ignorant, when the spread of knowledge shall so ameliorate man, that virtue shall be enthroned and vice laid in chains. Both are equally deluded. The truth is, that the Papacy is becoming worse and worse, more loathsome and oppressive from year to year, because its antagonism to the truth of God is becoming more and more intense, as that truth more loudly asserts its high prerogative to rule for good. And the world, in one point of view, becomes more and more ungodly as the church of Christ grows more and more pure. We mean, the world is left to sink into deeper sin, because it is resisting another and another proof that God is among men of a truth. It is this that hangs the future of our earth in darkness,—and it is this that should prompt the believer to live upon his watch-tower, to come out and be separated, lest he be found swelling the aggregate of the world's corruption.

Youthful Godliness—The Genuine and the Counterfeit.

The religion of the young—The prophet Jeremiah—Peculiarities of juvenile religion—Instances—Philip Henry—Matthew Henry—Dr. M'Crie—Dr. M——, ——C—— M——.—The morning cloud and the early dew—A case—Why are the children of godly parents often leaders in ungodliness?

THE Scriptures fully warrant the conclusion, that the children of men may become the subjects of saving grace in very tender years. We know that Jeremiah was sanctified from his birth, or consecrated to the service of his God. Samuel was in like manner early dedicated to the Holy One; and his life in infancy and age alike betokened that his consecration was far more than official or formal. These cases sufficiently prove that it is not the hoary head alone which may be found in the way of holiness. Timothy knew the Scriptures from his youth. The sovereign Spirit can "ordain strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings;" and He who could command the very stones to speak—were man to become mute in his Creator's cause, can give to the heart of infancy the emotions, and to its understanding the light, which unequivocally proclaim their heavenly origin by their heavenly tendency.

The characteristics of such juvenile religion are marked and peculiar. The simplicity of faith is then most remarkable, and its strength is in direct proportion to its simplicity. The ardour of affection is then most glowing; and urged onward by that love to the Saviour,

which is often the presiding motive in the young disciple's heart, he frequently advances to attainments—to intelligence, as well as to feelings regarding the things of the Spirit, which stain the glory of some hoary heads. None teaches like God, because none but him can teach the heart; and when the power and demonstration of the Spirit are imparted, the progress in knowledge and in grace is like the growth of a tree planted by the rivers of water. There is no doubt felt—there is no suspicion cherished—there are no hard thoughts of God allowed to enter such minds—he is trusted with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. The love of Christ, so influential in the bosom of a youthful disciple, leads to all that, and yielding themselves without resistance to the guidance of the Spirit, such babes in Christ often earn a good degree in spiritual things before others have begun to sit down at the Saviour's feet. Unresisting and unquestioning acquiescence in the declarations of God, thus signalize the youthful believer.

Instances of this youthful godliness meet us on every side. While many who have been trained in holy habits, and made familiar with prayer from the moment when they knew their right hand from their left, have become monuments of Satan's power, and spurned all restraints away, others have ripened fast for glory, and been early transferred to the better country. While Augustine, for instance, and John Newton, and many more, have trampled on all that should have restrained them, have gloried in their shame, and rushed into ungodliness, with irrepressible zeal, others have yielded without a struggle to the movements of that hallowing power which subdues the soul at first to God, which continues it in subjection, and never forsakes it till the land Beulah be its eternal home.

One of the most pleasing instances of such youthful godliness is found in the case of Philip Henry. It is not recorded that any great transition ever took place in the history of his soul. Cradled as he was under the shadow of a palace, and acting as the playmate of princes,

he was yet graciously kept from the contamination which is too common amid such scenes. His mother's daily prayer and frequent catechisings, her painstaking to train her children betimes in the good ways of the Lord, were blessed as the antidote to the spiritual dangers which surrounded the boy; and when he had advanced far in that course along which the followers of the Lamb seek the stature of perfection, he often mentioned, with thankfulness to God, his great happiness in having had such a mother—one who was to him what Lois and Eunice were to Timothy—training him in the knowledge which comes from heaven—and taking possession of his heart for God, ere Satan had set his stamp on young Henry's heart, or the world wrapt its entanglements around him. By this process he was gradually led to the Redeemer of the lost; and there is no reason to doubt that his mother's efforts were blessed, and her prayers answered on his behalf, in such a way as to prevent that pollution which could not otherwise have been prevented in such a vicinity as that in which Philip Henry was trained. He himself, indeed, has referred to his first communion as the period "when the match was made, and the knot was tied" between the Saviour and his soul; but the impressions which he had received at a period much earlier than that, were most probably the seminal elements—the germs of the divine life in the soul.

Here, then, is a case of very early godliness, ripening anon into great spiritual beauty, and reaching a stature which few have ever equalled. Philip Henry passed from death to life—he was converted to God—at an age when many exhibit only strong animal instincts, or resistless tendencies to error, and hence he furnishes an encouraging example of the blessedness of "bearing the yoke of the Lord Jesus in youth." In his own language, "the manna was gathered early." It was "a young saint becoming an old angel." He remembered his Creator in the days of his youth, or "the days of his choice—his choice days and his choosing days," and

in the end he sent forth his boughs like Lebanon. That simple and unwavering faith which characterised him in childhood, continued to signalize him through life, and spread a holy sunshine through his soul, which persecution, with all its hardships, could not eclipse.

Matthew Henry, the son of Philip, presents another specimen of early piety, which shows how rapid may be the progress of those whom the Spirit of God is teaching. When he was three years of age, Matthew Henry could read the Bible distinctly; and as he grew in years, he visibly grew in grace. "The thoughtful boy was often remarkably solemnized under his father's preaching, and when the services of the sanctuary were over, would haste to his little chamber to weep and pray, and could scarcely be prevailed on to come down and share the family meal." "With his young sister he held a little prayer-meeting on the Saturday afternoons, and amid the sequestered sanctity of their peaceful home, and under the loving eye and wise instruction of their tender parents, these olive plants grew round about the table." He delighted in the society of the godly, in listening to their discourse, and learning wisdom at their lips. In short, his case is one of the most pleasing upon record, of a heart early drawn to Christ, and so closely knit to him, as to leave little room for the world's ascendency, though, no doubt, there were countless efforts made against him by the world's prince. And the remarkable thing in the devoutness of this child is its solidity. The Scriptures were at once its basis and cement. It was not sentiment. It was not mere emotion. As little was it the mere cleverness of a wonderful child, inflated into importance, or dragged into notoriety, by the vanity of indiscreet parents. It was not merely the morning cloud or the early dew. It was substantial and manly piety—the fruit of the Spirit; and such, therefore, as was certain to shine more and more unto the perfect day.

There can be no doubt that Dr M'Crie, the biographer of Knox, was early made a subject of grace. His mo-

ther's example, her lessons, and her prayers, won him, even in infancy, to the truth; and it is recorded of him that he often mentioned with much feeling how deeply he was affected by what he heard at a female prayer-meeting, to which he was led by her when he was a mere child. And as he grew in years, it appears that he grew in grace, for he had presided at the family worship, and catechised the servants, "when he could be little more than ten years of age." In Dr M'Crie, then, we see another added to the list of those who, under a mother's training, and pains, and prayers, have been guided into the narrow way. By the blessing of the sovereign Spirit, who calls one upon the knee, and another—though, O how few!—when the head is hoary, or the worn-out frame stretched upon a dying bed, he gave the earliest, as he also gave the best, of his days to Him who died that we might live. And in infancy, as in youth, his godliness was of a manly type. It led to energetic action even when he was a very stripling; and at the time when others were wasting their energies upon trifles, he was devoting himself to the acquisition of that knowledge which was to furnish him at last for the work which God had in providence in store for him. In this case, also, we see the early germ ripening into mature and mellow fruit. The plastic mind receives an impression which it never loses, and a soul is made one spirit with the Lord, at an age long anterior to that at which others become alive to the great realities either of time or eternity. Christ has selected the character of a little child as the type of those who become the subjects of the King of Zion; and in the unsuspecting character, the simplicity, and humility of early godliness, where it is the genuine fruit of the Spirit, we discover the reason of the Saviour's selected type.

We have heard a much-honoured minister of Christ, now gone to his rest and his reward, tell that he never knew the time when he did not love the Lord Jesus. Like Philip Henry, he disapproved of the tenets of those who pried too closely into the period of their conversion,

and who reckon none safe but those who can tell the occasion or the hour. Dr M—— had made no violent transition himself, and disliked dogmatic insisting upon it in others. Trained at the feet of godly parents, though surrounded with the temptations which affluence often brings, he was from his earliest years a believer in Jesus, and betimes a disciple of that Spirit who alone makes wise unto salvation. And throughout his whole career, there was undeviating consistency, and transparent honesty of character. There was nothing rapt, ecstatic, or exciting; but there was vigour, there was energy and sobriety presiding over the whole. Temptations such as might have upset the principle of ordinary men, were resolutely withstood; and he went down to the grave like a shock of corn fully ripe, honoured by all, and loved by those who had access to the knowledge of his heart. Here, then, is another instance in which juvenile godliness waxed stronger and stronger. It sprung from the incorruptible seed. It was refreshed by the dew of which that of Hermon was a type. He who promised fulfilled the promise, "I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day,"—and by such cases, we are warned not to dogmatize regarding either the period or the process of conversion. Is the heart won to Christ? Are the affections set on things above? Is the soul panting after God like the hart for the water brooks? Are the beauties of holiness adorning the life? Then be these the soul's credentials that God has visited it by his grace, the testimony of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if it was in the morning of life—like Samuel, or Jeremiah, or any saint of God—let our hosanna just be the louder, because the grace of God has made the weak to be like David, and David like the angel of the Lord.

But the most noted and thoroughly scriptural example of juvenile piety which has come under our notice is the case of C. M——. He was a youth of a good family, sprightly, and thoughtless, though always gentle and do-

cile. But he had transgressed, and was reproved. The reproof passed through the conscience to the heart; it stuck like an arrow there, and from that period C. M—— became, as far as man durst judge, a new creature in Christ Jesus. Unknown to his parents, who might have frowned on the attempt, he collected the servants of the household from time to time; he solemnly addressed them on the interests of their souls, and prayed for the favour of God on their behalf. After some time, he was seized with a lingering illness, and died in his ninth year; but that dying boy's chamber was like a Bethel, where many a solemn lesson was imparted, and many a solemn warning sounded in the ears of brothers, and relations, and friends. Minister after minister came to learn wisdom at the dying child's lips, and one of them, at least, ascribed his own enlargement in the knowledge of divine things to the lessons which he learned by the deathbed of that boy. For years his memory was solemnizing to all who dwelt beneath the roof. His sayings gleamed like spiritual light through that abode; and never, perhaps, was there a finer exhibition of Jehovah's prerogative in choosing weak things to confound the mighty, and things which are not to bring to nought things which are. The conversion of Philip Henry led to the conversion of Matthew; and the godliness of Matthew, embodied or embalmed in his Commentary, is passing down from generation to generation, irrigating the souls of men, invigorating piety, rebuking formalism, and protesting against all ungodliness. In like manner, the early religion of C. M—— is still transmitted, through the means of impressions which his case was blessed to produce on the souls of more than one minister of Christ. It is thus that God shows us what man might have been had he never fallen, or what he may yet become, when the grace of God shall rebuild the spiritual ruin, and supplant the loathsomeness of sin by the beauties of holiness. Beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings; but scarcely less beautiful are his who receives them, and

then walks, as C. M—— did, in the way of God's commandments.

We cannot fail to mention, however, that what appears to be early piety is often only the morning cloud and the early dew. Parental affection or partiality tries to cherish hope, and eagerly grasps at what is supposed to betoken the commencement of grace in the soul; but how many of these hopes are doomed to bitter disappointment—how often does it happen that the parent's heart is broken by the conduct of that very child who once gave promise that he would walk in the paths of pleasantness and peace! There might be the appearance of piety, or of love to what related to holiness and heaven. There might even be secret prayer and keen affection, and sometimes tears wept, or horror felt at the appearance of sin; and all these might foster the hope that that youth had taken God in Christ for his portion. But years rolled on. The pleasures of sin were first sipped—then tasted—then drunk up as the ox drinketh water. The Spirit of God was grieved, and then it was made plain that the promising appearances were but the garnishing of the sepulchre; the tender conscience was but the early dew—the flower withered on its stalk, and left only putrescence behind it. There was no conversion—no saving change wrought upon the heart; and with a zeal proportioned perhaps to their former restraints, some of this class have rushed forward to iniquity, as we may suppose the Hebrews rushed to the stream when Moses brought water from the rock. "I know I am a poor sinner," wrote such a promising boy to one who had addressed him from a distance on the concerns of his soul; "but I cast myself upon Christ and trust in his mercy." That friend wept for joy at the message; but the boy soon belied his own protestations, and revolving years rendered him accomplished in sin. It was man's persuasion, and not the Spirit's grace, which wrought the work; and it melted away like the mirage of the desert—it was illusory like the fervours of the mystic.

We believe that it accords with the observation of those who watch most closely for souls, that the children of godly parents often go astray—nay, they actually become in some cases signalized by their wickedness. No doubt the world exaggerates the extent of this wo—in self-defence, ungodly men exult in and blazon whatever can reflect on the godly; but still the calamity referred to has not seldom occurred—and whence this phenomenon? How does it happen that those who are trained in homes where prayer is wont to be made, often prove at last the source of wo to those who love them, and do despite to the Spirit of grace?

In their training, there may be too little consideration for the weakness of youth. Strong meat, instead of meat for babes, may be set before them; and thus the violence of the rebound or the recoil may carry them into spheres where only sin can be promoted—the pent-up river sweeps away the barrier, and desolation tracks its course.

Or, if it be not thus that the case can be explained, the aberration may result from the fact, that grace has been so long resisted, or conscience so long stifled, that the misguided wanderer plunges into sin to silence the admonitions of the monitor within; he must sin with a high hand to repress what remains of good. The abuse of privileges, we know, not merely increases our guilt—it turns them into banes; and he who has resisted a mother's tears or a father's prayers, is obviously ripening for any excess. "The word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little"—with what design? Was it that they might be reclaimed, converted, and saved? No—"that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken."

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that unless there be a thorough change of heart wrought by the Omnipotent Spirit, every other appliance is feeble against the heart of man, whether in youth or age. He can laugh at every earthly check, as leviathan mocks at a straw.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Believer's Warfare.

". . . . . It is one of the subtlest stratagems the enemy of mankind uses to delude us, that by lulling us into a false security his conquest may be the easier. We should always be in no other than the state of a penitent, because the most righteous of us is no better than a sinner."—EDMUND BURKE.

"Put on the whole armour of God."—EPH. vi. 11.

The Believer's Warfare.

The nature of the struggle—Its causes—And aspects—An example—The Saviour's temptation—Its meaning—And use—An illustration in the ministry of Dr. Chalmers—Sinai mistaken for Calvary—The cure for man's spiritual malady—Ignorance a proof of knowledge—Sir Isaac Newton.

"O WRETCHED man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?"—"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ruler of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"—"Put on the whole armour of God," and "Fight the good fight of faith,"—these are some of the texts by which the Word of God describes the conflict of a believer upon earth. Satan, and all who are confederated with him in seeking the ruin of man—the heart within, the world without, friends and enemies, joy and sorrow, youth and age, poverty and wealth, sickness or health, the solitary place, as well as the crowded city—may be the scenes or the sources of trial and temptation to those who would follow the Lord fully. The prince of this world often succeeds in keeping those who submit to his power in great tranquillity. Their mountain stands strong; their passions often do not swell and tumultuate like those of other men; conscience brings no charge; and at last they have no bands, even in their death—they pass away from the haunts of busy men without compunction and alarm. But, on the other hand, all who would live godly, have a fight to maintain and a warfare to wage. They are often constrained to con-

fess that "their soul melteth for heaviness." "I remember mine afflictions and my misery, the wormwood and the gall," are words which are often upon their lips. They feel that true religion in the soul of man is a rare exotic. It requires to be nursed with tenderest care; and, in spite of all their painstaking, it is like to droop, and wither, and die. How it prospers, is sometimes beyond their comprehension, until they remember who said, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

The causes of this lifelong struggle, as we have indicated, are multiform and manifold. The accuser of the brethren is the instigator of the internal warfare, and he has temptations adapted to every case, or appliances which bear with skilful and malignant effect upon every constitution. At one time, the fiery dart is lodged in some timid, shrinking soul. Thoughts are suggested, and crowds of vain imaginations flit through the mind, which agitate and harass, and wellnigh goad to despair. In prayer, the mind roams, and refuses to be attracted even by the grandest and most awful realities—nay, perhaps impious and appalling sentiments take the place of the desires of a humble and contrite heart. For weeks and months, the most earnest and devout of believers have been haunted by these imaginations, so that religion became a burden—its exercises were shunned, or, at least, became causes of dread, of depression and distress. The Bible's truth—the Saviour's power or willingness to save—the soul's certain perdition—Jehovah's inexorable law; these and similar sources have been the occasion of the trials to which we refer; and, stimulated into more than usual activity by such conflicts, the mind has become prolific of sentiments and expressions, such as no ordinary eye hath seen, nor heart conceived. Those whose life is like a sail upon a summer sea—whose religion is all serenity—and whom the Prince of Peace keeps in perfect tranquillity, cannot fathom these depths of Satan's wiles; but those who have been exposed to his assaults, can tell that no cala-

mity is more grevious than the appalling thoughts which are thus often injected into the soul. Whether they enter along the channel of some bodily weakness, or some heavy trial, or some gloominess of temperament, or tendencies to doubt and despondency, certain it is that they make the dust the bed, and sackcloth the covering of many a heavy-laden soul.

One in this condition has written as follows:—"You may perhaps recollect, that I stated to you that my chief distress arose from *blasphemous suggestions—unnatural, monstrous, and horrid*—which seemed to fill my mind, and hurry away my thoughts, with a force as irresistible as a whirlwind. I strove against them, I prayed against them, but it was all in vain. The more I strove, the more they prevailed. The very effort to banish them appeared to detain them. My soul all this while was wrapped in midnight darkness, and tossed like the ocean in a storm. It seemed to me as if I was delivered over to the powers of darkness, and that to aggravate my wretchedness, some strange and awfully impious association would be suggested by almost every object that met my eye. You ask me to describe my deliverance. It was gradual. A return of domestic comforts, a restoration of health, and an occupation of the mind with duty, were the means which God was pleased to bless to the removal of this distressing experience. For twelve or thirteen years, I have had no return of this state of mind, except to a partial extent; yet I have, at times, been greatly harassed with these fiery darts of the wicked one, which I can truly say are my sorest affliction. I have always remarked, that these painful exercises of mind have attended seasons of special examination and prayer."*

We know of cases similar to that which has now been described, in which the language which was employed was such as could not be repeated—so dishonouring to God—so impious, nay, so blasphemous was it. For years the calamity continued, and it grew at last into

* Alexander on Religious Experience, pp. 185, 186.

the inveteracy of a chronic disease. It appeared to become an organic portion of the very soul; and, though deliverance did come, the protracted trial left such consequences behind it, that the soul entirely escaped from them only when the body was prepared for the grave. In Bunyan's Holy War, the principles involved in such a struggling condition are clearly unfolded; and he who would learn to repel the incursions of the distracting enemy, may have his spiritual armour burnished by studying the example and the lessons of one who fought so courageously the good fight of faith.

But there is one memorable example upon record, which is of itself sufficient to clear away the difficulties which often environ and becloud the believer. One of the most remarkable portions of the Word of God, is that which tells that "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." Even then he was under the guidance of the Author of all holiness; and the believer may venture humbly to hope, that his temptations, like those of his Lord, will tend to greater good and glory in the end. But, when the tempter poured in his enticements into the Redeemer's holy and unsullied soul—when he assailed his righteous spirit, first, by bodily temptation, suggested by the fact that the Redeemer was an hungered—when he tempted him next through the medium of the lust of the eye, by exhibiting, in gorgeous panorama, all the splendour of the world—or when the tempter proved the spirit of Jesus a third time, urging him to presumptuous sin, by casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, —did these enticements impart any pollution to that righteous soul? Though injected, did those fiery darts defile where they burned? On the contrary, they were instantly quenched, or cast back on the assailant—though the wicked one came, he found nothing in Christ. There was no tampering with his enticements —nothing but frowns for his wiles, and deeper condemnation for his guilt. Armed in the panoply of truth, the Redeemer repelled all aggression by the

sword of the Spirit. He at least had on the whole armour of God, and came forth from the furnace untouched by its fire. "It is written," was the shield of asbestos held up against the assault.

Now, his case is recorded for our guidance and comfort. Had the Saviour, even for a breath, harboured the foul suggestions, the holy would have become unholy, and the hopes of humanity would have been quenched for ever. But the mere fact that they were suggested, did not defile him—the sin was the tempter's still; and so precisely is the case with the child of God. Are the temptations entertained? Are they turned like a sweet morsel under our tongue? Does the abominable thing become a beloved thing, which we would gladly welcome and retain, if we durst? Then the sin is ours; we adopt it, and make it our own. But, do we repel it? Is it our burden and our plague? Is our language this—"Get thee behind me, Satan?" Is our cry this—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Do we keep nearer and nearer to the Fountain? Do we press nearer and nearer to the Rock that is higher than we? Then the sin is not ours—it is Satan's. We grant that this may be a rare case; for, O how open is the heart of man to defilement amid such things! how strong its affinity with the suggestions of the evil one! But, while these incursions continue our burden and our pain, they are the tempter's transgression, not ours; just as the hand of one, over-mastered by a superior power, and compelled to do a guilty deed, is not itself made guilty. Temptation is not necessarily sin; but yielding to it is. Those who are thus "afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted," may weep and wail; but if the Lion of the tribe of Judah be our confidence, while the roaring lion seeks to destroy, we shall be more than conquerors, through Him who loved us. We have a subtle spirit to assail and to betray; but we have One who is at once omniscient and omnipotent to defend. Great is he who is against us; but is not the Angel of the Covenant

for us? Is not our Intercessor ever pleading at God's right hand? Is not God's strength pledged to maintain—and what evil can befall? Is not our triumph secure?

Amid his noble efforts to reclaim the outcast in the streets and the lanes of Glasgow, Dr Chalmers met with one who habitually cherished hard and gloomy thoughts of God. Stern and austere in her own temperament, she transferred her feelings to the God whom she adored, or rather from whom she recoiled. Approaching the side of the bed on which she lay in lingering distress, he "fixed her attention by the vehemence of his utterance, and said, 'Now, I have just come to tell you that Almighty God has no ill-will at you. I want you to understand that he has a perfect good-will toward you.'" Now, when temptations, such as we have been considering, seize upon a mind attempered like that of her whom the great Christian philanthropist so vehemently addressed, they find too ready a welcome—they take possession of a place already swept and garnished for their entry. In this way we may perhaps explain the terrible anguish of some tried souls. If Jehovah be regarded only as a stern, unbending judge—if he be seen on the summit of Sinai, with clouds and thick darkness for his pavilion, and not on the slopes of Calvary, while the Sun of Righteousness is tipping it with heaven's own light, temptations become doubly overwhelming—conscience feels on fire, and reason may reel. Or even though there may not be such gloomy views of God, still, imperfect glimpses of the gospel, lingering remains of legal terror, limited attainments in holiness, and countless shades of constitutional peculiarity, may give a barb to the arrows which Satan shoots, or poignancy to the pain which they occasion. And what is the cure? Where shall we find a rescue? Let the confidence of the soul be concentrated upon Him who is mighty to save. If, on the one hand, we have reason to say, "No man careth for my soul," be it ours to think the more, upon the

other, of that "Man who is our hiding-place from the storm, and our covert from the tempest." If we feel that all God's waves are rolling over us, be it ours to hasten with greater urgency to Him who is the Rock, and whose work is perfect. If our hope appears to have perished from the Lord, let Him who is the hope of Israel be more resolutely clung to. If melancholy, if gloom and dejection, have settled down upon the soul, then let Him who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all, be the more confided in. If the Saviour of the lost be thus our confidence, our righteousness and strength—our very tears, and sorrows, and woes, will prove our blessings in the end. The broken cisterns, and the broken reeds of earth, will all be put in their proper place, and prized at their proper value, when the Saviour is regarded by us just as he is presented by God.

The ignorance of some minds furnishes a noble testimony to the extent of their knowledge. When Sir Isaac Newton contemplated the mutual action of planets and comets on each other, he thought that the effects of the disturbing influence might, in course of time, become so great, as to require a period of restoration, or a period in which that influence should be somehow counteracted. He had not data, or he wanted an opportunity for calculating the extent of that disturbance, and, like a true philosopher, left his views as *a doubt*. But Laplace and Lagrange arose. They made the calculation, and ascertained that as there are disturbing influences at work among the stars, so there are periods of restoration in the system, or periods when all derangement is rectified, and absolute harmony restored. Now, this wondrous disclosure of astronomy finds its parallel in the spiritual system. There, also, there are disturbing influences. There, also, there is an action and a reaction, which by reason of man's perversity, often leads to intricate perplexity. But the one Spirit rectifies and readjusts the whole—the Sun of Righteousness forming the centre of the grand spiri-

tual harmony. The gospel is the divine expedient for counteracting every disturbing influence; and, guided by that, the tried believer may delight himself in the abundance of peace—at least "a rest remaineth for him." The tossings and the trials of such a believer's life, should just endear the more Him who is mighty to save; and whatever produces that result, either comes directly from God, or is overruled by him for good.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Self-Condemned Believer.

"Light of those whose dreary dwelling
Borders on the shades of death,
Come, and all Thy love revealing,
Dissipate the clouds beneath.

The new heaven and earth's Creator,
In our deepest darkness rise;
Scattering all the night of nature,
Pouring day upon our eyes.

Still we wait for thine appearing,—
Life and joy thy beams impart;
Chasing all our fears, and cheering
Every meek and broken heart."

TOPLADY.

The Self-Condemned Believer.

All sound experience wrought by God's Spirit—A case—The explanation—A temptation—Vain thoughts—Their danger—Waiting upon God, but not expecting while we wait—Simple faith and a free gospel the sovereign specific—A contrast—The abundance of peace.

It is equally the dictate of right reason and of revelation, that all things come of God, and all return to him again. They subserve his purposes, they advance his glory; and only then are they fulfilling the ends for which they are and were created. It is a well-known fact, that a vessel sailing from her harbour constantly eastward would return to her harbour again, were there no obstructing continents and islands, or no disturbing currents; and, in like manner, every thing emanating from God should return to God again, and would do so, were there no disturbing influences at work to rob him of his revenue of glory from the productions of his hands.

This is specially true in the domain of Christian experience. Here "of God, and to God, and through God, are all things," in a pre-eminent degree. He is at once the source and the centre of all that man's spirit is. Every thing in the believing soul, when that soul is in spiritual health, moves at the bidding of Jehovah, just as the world sprang into being when his fiat commanded it to be. Let us, then, farther contemplate some of his handiworks in this the most exquisite of all his operations—the preparing of a redeemed soul for glory.

And we would fix our present meditations on one of the timid and self-condemned among the children of God. Let it be noticed that we say self-condemned children of God. There are some who feign to acknowledge that they are guilty, yet prove that their confession is not heartfelt by continuing to augment their guilt. There are some who affect to confess their inborn depravity, and then only prove more plainly that they *are* depraved by the ungodliness of their walk and conversation. But we speak of those who are indeed taught of God; and there is a class among them who often live from year to year, timid, dejected, and downcast in spirit. They write bitter things against themselves. They hang down the head like a bulrush. They fear that they shall one day perish, that God has forgotten to be gracious, and that his mercy has failed for evermore. They blush, and are ashamed to look to the place where God's honour dwells. They are afraid to hope lest it should be delusion. At the very moment at which they are enjoying God's truth, and giving to others very conclusive proof that they are interested in the great salvation, they will scarcely believe that the heart is impressed at all. There *is* an undercurrent of hope. The soul *is* sustained by the grace of God, though it shrinks from acknowledging it in words; but it does not walk like a child of light—like one whose face is heavenward, and whose heart's holiest affections are sent on before it to the house not made with hands.

With more than one such case we are familiar. A child of God—for we do not scruple to call her so—had long walked in light, and rejoiced in the truth which the Spirit imprints on the heart. It occurred at last, however, that there was something spurious in the experience of the past, and suspicion regarding the soul's wellbeing for a season took possession of the mind. There was no forsaking of God; he was waited on in all known paths. There was no recognised doubting of his truth—there was only a questioning of the

individual experience or faith, and a consequent obscuration of the individual hope, and peace, and joy. It was not Christ's finished work, but the Spirit's progressive work, that began to be confided in; and despair was therefore constantly hovering over the soul. We have seen the Alps of vapour which are sometimes piled around the setting sun in most fantastic forms. Dark and gloomy they are, so that even the centre of our world's light appears to be eclipsed. Behind these masses, however, he is shining, and proves his presence by the facings of silver and gold which skirt the cloud; and so was it with the beclouded soul to which we refer—years rolled away before its tranquillity and hope were fully restored to that soul. It was not extinction, but only a partial eclipse—an eclipse, however, which sufficed to disturb and agitate the mind.

Now, what has happened in that case happens in many. It is not exactly the morbid and the melancholy that we are now considering. It is a case different, by many shades, from these, though still one which may vex and harass. But that there is an under-current of faith and hope in such cases, is made evident by this. When a stranger judges these exercised souls as they judge themselves,—that is, when a stranger writes bitter things against them, or ventures to hint that they may one day perish,—it clearly appears that there is a substratum of hope in the mind; they are startled and pained at the thought, that their case should be believed by others to be what they themselves fear it is. And what is the simple remedy for this case? It is looking unto Jesus. Are we dejected and perplexed? Look unto Him, that our goings may be established. Are we writing bitter things against ourselves? Look unto Him who blotted out the handwriting that condemned us, taking it out of the way, and nailing it to his cross. Are we self-condemned, so that we can scarcely look up? Then look unto Jesus, that the soul may know that in him there is no condemnation; and thus, beckoned to him by all that befalls, the downcast

soul will be raised up, and the mourning soul made glad.

Moreover, it should be borne in mind that there is a twilight and a dawn in spiritual things, as well as a perfect day. There are babes in Christ, as well as strong men who can do all things through Christ strengthening them; but the babe has life as surely as the mighty man. The twilight presages day as certainly as the sun is the centre of light; and the self-condemned should therefore be encouraged, for assuredly that very self-condemnation, if it bring us to the Redeemer, is itself a proof and an index of spiritual life. Such souls, indeed, may test themselves by the standard of those saints whose attainments are most signal; and, in the view of their simple faith, their triumphant patience, or their bright hope, the self-condemned may droop and despond. But to the law and the testimony, not the lives of the saints. That law takes the feeblest of the children by the hand. As a nurse leads her child, it teaches us to go. As one whom his mother comforts, the Word of God comforts his children; and all would have their portion in due season, were the hand of faith, withered as the arm may seem, held out to receive what the only true God has provided, nay, presses on our acceptance.

We may here glance at a temptation and a danger which sometimes assail the timid and self-condemned.

The temptation may be thus described. The multitude of wicked thoughts that start up or even lodge in the mind, seem to render it doubtful whether grace be there at all. It is true, they come unbidden—they arise in a way that can scarcely be explained, but still they infest the mind; and can such a mind be in a gracious state? Is it not righteously self-condemned?

We repeat, Are these vain thoughts your pleasure, or are they your burden? Do you welcome them, or would you expel them if you could? Do you dally with the tempter, or is the language of your heart, "Get thee behind me, Satan?" If the former, then you may fear,

nay, be sure, that you either have no lot and no portion in the things of the Spirit, or are in danger of making shipwreck of the faith. But if the latter be the case—if you hate vain thoughts, and seek in God's strength to repel them, then you are humbly following your Lord, and carrying the cross which he had to bear. He too, we have seen, was tempted, but he repelled the tempter. Again, and again, and again, the endeavour was made by subtle wiles to captivate or ensnare him; but the wicked one found nothing in him, and by the grace of God it may be the same with those who seek to walk in his footsteps. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan; and so the Spirit-taught children of God may be tempted, not that they should be cast down from a pinnacle, or seduced to doubt the Lord their God, but that, by the grace of God given unto them, they may stand more firmly than ever, and know assuredly that in the Lord they have righteousness and strength.

Such is the temptation. The danger to which the self-condemned believer is sometimes exposed is this—the soul settles down in the conviction, that as it is waiting and seeking, it must wait and seek till God be pleased to visit it in mercy.

Now, that is a right sentiment, and in itself it may betoken the deference that is due to the sovereign Spirit, who works when, and where, and as he pleases. It is the soul still, in short, and learning that God is God. But if the sentiment, "I am waiting and seeking," be employed as a cloak to cover my doubt that he for whom I wait will not come, or that he whom I seek will not be found of me—then the Lord, who demands the heart, sees that the heart is not given. You are right, perfectly right, to wait patiently on God, for the man after God's own heart did so; but you are wrong if you make that waiting a cover for your suspicion that God will not come, or for your inactivity in not using all appointed means, or using them without faith and without expectation. "Our soul waiteth for the Lord:

he is our help and shield"—"Truly, my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation,"—these are the sentiments of David; and they who wait in that spirit "shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint."

The specific remedy for this aspect of the spiritual malady is a clear apprehension of the full, free, instant salvation provided for all who receive it. God *may*, in holy sovereignty, keep the sinner waiting for the light of his countenance—and if we have wearied him with our transgressions for twenty, thirty, forty, perhaps for threescore years, need we wonder though he teaches us to bow to his supreme will, before he visits us in love? But ordinarily he waits because we do not believe. The evil heart of unbelief, and not the sovereignty of God, is the barrier; and the grand remedy, we therefore say, is the instant reception of God's offered mercy—instant compliance with his gracious call. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you remission of sins." Let that truth secure the control of the mind, and then, as the foul night-bird flees to her hiding-place and darkness when the day begins to dawn, the troubles which harass the self-condemned mind will disappear before the shining of that Sun who has healing in his beams. It is often remarked, that in a lighted chamber the deepest shadow is under the lamp—and the fact finds a counterpart in spiritual things. Christ's light is shining around us—but if the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!

In contrast with the timid self-condemned soul, we might place the joyous and exulting. Ever anointed with fresh oil, and fed on the finest of the wheat, we might tell of such believers abounding in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. They have peace like a mighty river. They wonder that any Christian can ever be sad. To be brought from the brink of perdition—to be cleansed in the blood of Him

who was Jehovah's fellow—to be a temple of the Holy Ghost—to be a joint-heir with Christ—to be an Enoch, walking with God—to have his Spirit testifying with ours that we are his children,—to what can all that lead but to the abundance of peace? That peace some do accordingly enjoy. They live in sunshine, and radiate the light upon others. They are refreshed by clusters like those of Eschol. They draw water from the wells of salvation. They are fed on the hidden manna—and, like Daniel at the court of Belshazzar, they are fairer than other men appear.—Now, whence all this? The simplicity of faith explains the whole. Such believers take what God offers. They expect what God promises. They enjoy what God sets before them in his Word, and honouring God, they are honoured by him; delighting themselves in him, as David counselled, a new song is put in their mouth, the song which David himself so often and so sweetly sung—even praise unto our God.

The conclusion of the whole matter is ever this. If the timid would become bold, they should in simple faith lean on the Lord alone. If the self-condemned would be set free, they should look in simple faith to Him who died that we might live, and went down into the depths of the grave that we might ascend at last to the hill of God for ever. Whatever brings the believer in simple faith to his Lord, is a blessing directly from him, however frowning for a season it may seem. Whatever impedes our progress toward Christ, an enemy hath done it, though it come in the guise of an angel of light.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Unstable Believer.

"Is it thus that I requite
Grace and goodness infinite?
Every trace of every boon
Cancelled and erased so soon?
Can I grieve Thee, whom I love,—
Thee, in whom I live and move?
If my sorrow touch Thee still,
Save me from so great an ill!
Oh! the oppressive, irksome weight
Felt in an uncertain state!"

MADAME GUYON.

The Unstable Believer.

David Brainerd—His experience—Other illustrations—Edward Irving—His opinions—Remarks—Philip Melancthon—His instability—The dangers to which it led—Other cases—Examples of noted apostates—The explanation.

It would be deemed hazardous to venture the opinion, that David Brainerd was not established in the faith; and yet there is a sense in which that opinion is correct. Profoundly as he was penetrated with the love of souls, and though his own heart glowed with desires, among the most ardent that ever animated the bosom of man, after holiness and God, it is still true that he was often driven of the wind and tossed, not as ordinary believers are, but in a way more subtle and refined. Even a superficial glance at his wondrous Diary may enable us to illustrate this remark, and the illustration may operate at once as a beacon and a guide to troubled souls.

It is obvious, then, that either from peculiarity of temperament, or from misdirected earnestness of spirit, Brainerd was frequently not resting with a simple faith upon Him who is the Rock. That he walked much with God, no one who belongs to the household of faith can doubt. That he lived and laboured much in the Spirit, is equally beyond a question. And that he will mingle among those who are to shine as the stars for ever and ever, is not less true than either. His labours of love, his self-sacrificing devotedness, and his zeal akin to that of the burning ones before the throne—all tend to place Brainerd in a class by himself. He sits apart.

He dwelt under the shadow of the Cross, and was bound to the Crucified One, even as he himself was nailed to the accursed tree. In other words, David Brainerd was crucified with Christ.

Still, we say, a slight study of his case enables us to decide, that in some respects he was not an established Christian. Listen to the following references to his soul's condition, taken from his Journal. At one place, Dr Jonathan Edwards says,—"He complains that he seemed to be void of all relish for divine things, felt much of the prevalence of corruption, and saw in himself a disposition to all manner of sin. This brought a very great gloom on his mind, and cast him down into the depths of melancholy, so that he speaks of himself as amazed, as having no comfort, as filled with horror, and seeing no comfort in heaven or in earth." Now, exceedingly far from us be the attempt or the wish to undervalue such humbling and harassing exercises of soul. Those who have sojourned in the shadow of Sinai, and have heard the rolling of its thunders, as they threatened to crush the sinner, will clearly understand why one so holy and devoted as Brainerd should have mourned in his complaint, and made a noise against indwelling corruption. But when exercised as Edwards describes, how should he have acted? When, for instance, "the anguish which he endured was nameless and inconceivable"—when his "soul was weary of life, and he longed for death beyond measure"—when "he was ashamed that such a wretch as he had ever preached, and longed to be excused from that work"—when "he could not rest any more than a condemned malefactor"—or when he "complains of his ignorance, stupidity, and selfishness," * how should he have proceeded? When he thus laboured and was heavy laden, what should have been his alternative? Where was his help to be found? In instant flight to the Rock that is higher than we. In instantly going, when the Saviour

* For these and similar extracts, see Edwards' Life and Diary of Brainerd. Part V.

said, Come—going with all his felt ignorance, stupidity, and selfishness:—his ignorance, that he might know Him whom to know is life eternal—his stupidity, that he might be enlightened in all wisdom and spiritual understanding—his selfishness, that he might learn that no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. In brief, whether it be when the soul is first turning to God from sin, or after we have well advanced, as Brainerd beyond all controversy had done, on the path that leads to glory, our safety lies in constantly resorting to the Saviour of the lost—to Him who is the strength of the weak, the righteousness of the guilty, the wisdom of the wayward, and the hope of the despairing. It is this that the established Christian will ever seek grace to do; it was thus, for instance, that the dying Simeon did when he exclaimed, "Infinite wisdom has devised the whole with infinite love, and infinite power enables me to rest upon that power, and all is infinitely good and gracious;" and wherever temptation, or indwelling sin, or a roused conscience, or the probings of the law, keep us away from the Saviour, as the embodied love and truth of God, we are to that extent unstable. Even Brainerd was so, in as far as his lamentations were the result of spiritual convictions, and not of physical temperament; for, to dwell upon our own feelings only to brood and lament over our deadness, instead of instantly betaking ourselves to the wells of salvation, is only to prolong our misery, and rob the Redeemer of a portion of his glory as the Prince of Peace. "Look at this," said a Popish priest, presenting a crucifix to a dying man who had abjured his false faith; "it will do you more good than the Bible." "That is only a paltry peace of wood," said the dying Christian; "when I wish to gaze upon my crucified Saviour, I read his Word." Were that maxim at all times our guide, faith would become simpler and stronger, and the paroxysms of our spiritual sorrow would not be so pungent as they often are.

But there are other forms in which this instability

appears. Sometimes it originates in the want of a thorough conviction of sin. The law never came in power to the conscience. The spiritual disease is therefore not felt in its real inveteracy, nor the spiritual Physician resorted to with an earnestness proportioned to the need of him. There has been no marked transition in the life of such believers; grace and nature, though essentially distinct, appear to run into each other like the prismatic colours, so that it is often doubtful whether they should be ranked among believers at all. It is known to astronomers, that stars which once formed part of the universe, as seen by man, have mysteriously disappeared; and that fact in physics finds its analogy in spiritual things. There may not be extinction, but there is obscuration.

The most remarkable instance of this class, which modern times supply, is, perhaps, that of the Rev. Edward Irving. His was one of the most magnificent intellects that were ever gifted to man, and one of the noblest, most heroic natures that ever contended for the truth of God. Coleridge likened him to Luther. Chalmers described him as an old Roman engrafted upon a Christian; yet an English minister published a work in which he questions whether Edward Iriving was converted at all.* Now, it is known through all the churches how far this gifted man fell. Instead of being established in the faith, or standing in the old paths, like one who was rooted and grounded, he adopted sentiments which rank among the most extravagant, and practices which we may place among the most enthusiastic of all that have disturbed the tranquillity and marred the order of the church. Utterances that were proved to be impostures, were listened to as the voice of the Spirit of God. Hysteria was believed to be doing the work of inspiration; and

* See Refutation of Mr Irving's heresy, by Rev. A. S. Thelwall, A.M. of Trinity College, Cambridge. He says, p. 33, "I have been willing to hope that he was a converted man; but the more I read of his works, the less can I persuade myself that he is so." If there was ground for that suspicion, how solemn is the scrutiny which it should occasion in thousands!

while many were constrained to exclaim, How are the mighty fallen! others exulted in the injury inflicted on the cause of truth, through means of one who had before stood forth among the noblest and most intrepid of its champions. Here was one who had assailed the world's errors in every form, but who slipt from the sure foundation. He held the field alike against puling sentimentalism, against baptized worldliness, and proud infidelity; and, yet became at last as weak as Samson when his locks were shorn. We say nothing of the soul's portion; we speak only of the aberrations into which it was misled; and at the sight of such a noble wreck, who does not feel the need of exclaiming, "Hold THOU up our goings, and so we shall be safe?" Whatever was the occasion of that fall, it indicates too surely that the way of man is not in himself. Whether it was the native grandeur of a lofty nature not always subjected to grace, or the influence of a most lavish adulation on frail humanity, or the love of the novel and the exciting, or the absence of precise and definite theological views, in a mind where a grand but sometimes unbridled imagination was allowed to overlay the judgment, or a combination of all these with other disturbing forces,—need not be inquired. Enough to know that one strong man became unstable as water—one who had held, and held triumphantly against a host of assailants, the highest places of the field, became like flax before the flame, as soon as he had been enticed from the sure foundation laid in Zion. The progress from error to error was as remarkable as it was painful; and the whole may well enforce the saying of one to whom Edward Irving has been likened—we mean, the apostle Paul—"I am what I am, by the grace of God that is in me." To follow meteors, in preference to the Sun of Righteousness, can lead only to confusion and every evil work.

Philip Melancthon furnishes another example of the unstable believer. Few were more honoured than he in forwarding the work of the Reformation. Luther,

Calvin, and Melancthon, each in his peculiar sphere, were the grand instruments employed for furthering that blessed emancipation—they proved a threefold cord, which was not easily broken. Yet each had his peculiar infirmity, and that of Melancthon was instability. Whether from the gentleness of his temperament and his amiable spirit, or from some defective perception of the prerogatives and the power of God's simple truth, we need not decide; but incidents in his history show that, oftener than once, he would have compromised the cause of God and man's soul in Europe, had he been left to the guidance of his own wisdom and the support of his own strength. At one of the conferences so frequent in his day, it is well known that he made concessions, in the absence of Luther, which would have enervated the cause which Melancthon, beyond all controversy, wished to uphold. Vital truth would have been compromised, either from the fear or the favour of man; and thus another instance was supplied of the danger of swerving by a hair's-breadth from the simple truth which the Saviour unfolded. That is the divine panoply which renders us safe against every assailant; but, deprived of that, even Melancthon, with all his accomplishments, and elegance, and evangelical unction, was weak and unstable against the crafty devices of man. He could rejoice in the Word as a "heavenly ambrosia" for the soul; but he could not resolutely wield it as the sword of the Spirit, against which no antagonist can prevail.

But in every sphere, illustrations of our present topic may be found. Who, among those who watch for souls, has not witnessed exemplifications? There is a class of hearers of the Word who seem now zealous, ardent, and steadfast, but anon they are lukewarm—indifferent—dead. The house of God is resorted to, if there be aught to excite and regale; it is forsaken, if there be *only* God's simple truth, *only* prayer, *only* God's gracious gospel, *only* the Son of God exalted and extolled. They rather walk about Zion than dwell within the holy pre-

cincts. It is not humility and holiness that is sought, so much as mental gratification and feelings strongly stirred. There are some of this class whom it would, perhaps, be harsh to pronounce utterly unconverted; but their religious experience is of a kind which renders it very doubtful whether they be yet firmly adhering to the Rock. As you walk sedately to the appointed place of meeting between God and your soul, you may find such unstable ones hurrying hither and thither to the scene of greatest glare for the day, not asking, What will lead me nearest to Christ—what will make me most like him? but, Where am I likely to be most regaled—to have my feelings most stirred? without any regard to having the sepulchre internally cleansed. No marvel though shipwrecks occur among such professing followers of Christ, or though those who love their souls have to sigh and cry in secret, that the objects of their care may not in the end be found to be clouds without rain, wells without water, or trees without fruit.

But it is remarkable that the most frequent instances of instability are found among the most extreme sections of the Christian church. There are not a few who mistake extreme principle for strong principle. They substitute truth attenuated and wire-drawn, or beaten into leaf, in the place of truth in the solid mass; and when trial or temptation comes, they want the principle of stability, they totter and they fall. This is signally illustrated at periods when religion has become more than usually active, evangelical, and authoritative in a land. Men are then urged, by the pressure of circumstances, into positions for which they are not prepared. They affect a deeper experience—they hold a higher style of doctrine—than their own soul can sympathize with; and though they cannot gracefully descend from the pinnacle to which they have mounted, they often, by their own sad fall, cause the most charitable to fear that the heart had never been right with God. The case of David and others is recorded to prevent us from hastening to a harsh conclusion regarding such men;

but it is too manifest that they have not been steadfast in the covenant—they have returned again to folly, and to wallowing in the mire. The morning cloud has vanished—the early dew has been evaporated, and all seems sterile, leafless, and spiritually bleak.

Nor should we fail to notice, that even some of those who are stablished in the faith, are often subject to great fluctuations and vicissitudes. As soon as they begin to lean upon their own experience, however covertly or unconsciously—that is, as soon as they begin to act on the principle of a mystic, not of a believer—they become unstable as water. Few minds were better ordered than that of Dr Hugh Heugh. His theology was substantial —his experience deep and scriptural—yet even he had occasion to say, "I have been in a most remarkable exercise on this and the two preceding days. On Wednesday was in a state of terror, arising from having no evidence of true grace. An awful impression that I must be cut off for ever, and of what it was to suffer eternal misery—a fear lest I should be left to harden myself in unbelief and impenitence. Amidst this exercise all that I can say is, that I was not in despair." Such things are to the soul that is firmly rooted, what the tempest is to the forest-tree. However they may toss, they are overruled for good, if they drive us to Him whose word is powerful to produce a great calm.

There is a case on record concerning a man of this class. He had spent the early part of his life as the world does—in vanity and sin; but appeared to be at last converted, and could give such an account of his transition as might have prompted the envy of those whose conversion was less notable and distinct than his. He knew the very hour when the alleged change took place, and when his soul entered upon peace. But "by their fruits ye shall know them," was the Saviour's criterion; and the fruits of *this* conversion were perjury committed, and excommunication from the church inflicted as the wages of the sin. Of another extreme professor it is written, that his conversion was sudden,

and his experience remarkable. He became in succession a preacher, a fanatic, an infidel;* and in all the churches similar examples might be found of the unstable professor resting on his own feelings, not on the truth of God,—ascribing some transformation of character to the Spirit of all grace, when it should rather be imputed to excited emotion, to casual circumstances, or to Satan transformed into an angel of light. Better far the humble, contrite, broken-hearted confession of a true child of God, than such exhibitions of the factitious and the false in religion, paraded in great swelling words—believed, in many cases, by the unstable themselves, but not according to truth, and therefore destined, like the wandering star, to sink at last into a denser gloom.

Such are our remarks on the experience of the unstable. They may serve as a beacon on a sunken rock where many have made a shipwreck; and do they not furnish at once a comment and a key to the words, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us?"—(1 John ii. 19.)

* See Thoughts on Religious Experience, by Archibald Alexander, D.D., chap. viii.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Believer Established.

"And evermore beside him on his way
The unseen Christ shall move;
That he may lean upon His arm, and say,
'Dost thou, dear Lord, approve?'

O holy trust! O endless scene of rest!
Like the beloved John,
To lay his head upon his Saviour's breast,
And thus to journey on."

LONGFELLOW.

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by every wind of doctrine. The soul does not enjoy repose; and instead of giving the Saviour to see of the travail of his soul, it often happens that such an one must say, "I shall one day perish." Let us contemplate the established believer in contrast with this unhappy state of the soul.

Wherever religion consists of mere emotion, or something akin to excitement, the mind is ready to be driven of the wind and tossed. There are many who test their condition rather by the elation and the fervour of their feelings, than by the depth of their convictions, or the scriptural character of their principles. When, for example, their hearts glow under the influence of what they reckon love, they feel as if their mountain were standing strong, or as if they could never be moved. But, however desirable it may seem to be thus zealous in a good thing, it is obvious that the soul of a believer is not to be stayed upon his zeal, or his liveliness. In that case it would veer and fluctuate like a summer cloud, or like the restless sea. It is upon the sure word of the living God that it should ever repose. It is upon Him who is the rock, and whose work is perfect. The stable, steadfast believer is one who is strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus: not in the grace that is in himself, for that is but a drop from the ocean at the best—not in his progress or attainments, however advanced they may be—not in his faith, however firm—his love—his humility, or aught that the Redeemer has enabled him to do or to become; but in that Redeemer himself—the All in all of the heavenward soul.

Indeed, this is the secret of a prosperous and a peaceful soul, in all circumstances, and at all times. While man is unawakened regarding his sin, and therefore unconscious of his danger, he rests, without one alarm or misgiving, on what he himself can achieve; or when mere natural conscience, or still more, when superstition, like that which is the pervading soul of Popery, takes the control of his mind, he rests upon a combination of things all fallacious, because all earthly; or when a man

merely holds an orthodox creed, he puts that in the Saviour's place, and seeks stability in it; or, when he advances a degree farther, and feels that he must repent and believe, and be holy, he is ready to rest on his repentance or his holiness. Nay more, even when man has learned to glory only in the Lord, he is prone to repose upon the work of grace in the soul, rather than on the finished work of Christ for it. Now, never yet did a believer find true stability in such a course. On the contrary, we are stablished in the faith only in proportion as we rest implicitly on the sure foundation laid in Zion. It is not more certain that death renders the body physically helpless, and motionless, and cold, than that separation from the Saviour, from whatsoever cause, reduces the soul to spiritual feebleness or death. We must put on Christ. We must live by faith upon him. He must be in us the hope of glory—and then it is that we are established beyond the reach of overthrow. The assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end, will then become the portion of the heart.

And what are the means of advancing this stability? How may the soul be thus "rooted and grounded" in the faith?

It is a law as fixed and unvarying as that which regulates the revolution of the seasons, that he will be found the most established and steadfast believer who most abounds in prayer. All who are taught by the Spirit know that what the air of heaven is to the body —what sunshine is to the eye—what spring is to flowers, and herbs, and trees, prayer is to the believing soul —without it, that soul would sicken and die. As a means of increasing faith—of drawing forth affection—of purifying the heart, apart from all that is obtained in answer to prayer, this privilege ranks among the foremost in the estimate of a child of God. Every new visit to the throne becomes a means of augmenting the believer's stability; and as each season that revolves adds

but the very disappointment was overruled for good; and at length "in Christ believed, she found her peace with God; in Christ loved, she learned a new morality." The gospel became its own witness to her conscience and her soul, and she walked in the light which it sheds —a child of light—to the home of Him in whom is no darkness at all.

Now, few have better illustrated the believer's stability than this convert did. Lady Colquhoun, no doubt, had her spiritual vicissitudes, like all who traverse the wilderness to Canaan. The soul, like the sea, has its ebbings and flowings, by reason of the strength or subtlety of sin, the weakness of faith, and the earthliness of affections; but in the case of her to whom we refer, there is a marked and steady growth upon the whole, which beautifully illustrates the text which tells of the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Her calm and constant nature was eminently steadfast; and when consecrated by the grace of God, it needs no very practised eye to trace her growth in grace, from her first impressions received in Canongate Church till she was not, for God took her.

Nor is there any mystery in her establishment as a believer. It was not romantic fancy—it was not stimulated feeling—it was not unscriptural impressions, which formed either the basis or the guide of her godliness. It is true, that for a time, after religion began to assert its right to control the mind as the pilot the ship, Lady Colquhoun still mixed up not a little of worldliness with her walk. The theatre, for example, was occasionally frequented; but when the sinfulness of it was felt, she abandoned it for ever, and that with a decision as firm as characterised any action of her life. Withal, she became rooted and grounded in the faith, and the secret is found in her own record. "In temptation, without Christ I cannot conquer; but through him, I may surely do all things." "During the past week, I have got by degrees into a more comfortable frame, not from being sensible of any amendment in myself, but from trust in

my Saviour, and from being sensible that I must rest in him, sinful as I am." "I cannot feel satisfied, because I do not love my Lord sufficiently. What is this but resting on my own performances? And did I love him as his dearest saint, it would only be the work of his own Spirit, and he can work it even in me. If not, I will endeavour to rest on his naked word, that I am accepted in him." "One great cause of complaint with regard to myself I think is, that I live too little upon Christ. I could not live without him, but I forget my need of daily and hourly supplies from his hand of support and grace. I forget to ask his aid, not merely formally in the morning, but often, and as my necessities arise." These, and similar records, afford us a key to the stability and repose of this believer's soul. They show us why she was so staid and so serenely glad as a dweller "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" —and the same grace that prevailed in her, is mighty still to the establishing of the weakest soul. She lived so near the crucified One, that we are not surprised to hear Lady Colquhoun say on the eve of dissolution, "I die at the foot of the cross;" and those who walk, may also die, as she did. "Christ is my portion, and oh, what a portion! Seek that portion,"—were her words to one of her sons; and over such dying saints, the words may be pronounced, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Such is an illustration at once simple and scriptural of the established believer. No fitful vicissitudes—no excitement, on the one hand—nor cold formality, on the other. The lamp is both full of oil, and continually trimmed, after being filled and illumined by Him who enlightens every man—and those who do likewise, through grace, will "serve God, and see his face," and "follow the Lamb whithersoever he leadeth."

Another case—that of Arthur H. Hallam, who died at the early age of twenty-three—aptly unfolds the secret of a believer's stability. It should be given in his own exquisite words—"Lord, I have viewed," he says, "this

world over, in which thou hast set me; I have tried how this and that thing will fit my spirit, and the design of my creation, and can find nothing on which to rest, for nothing here doth itself rest, but such things as please me for a while, in some degree, vanish and flee as shadows from before me. Lo! I come to Thee—the Eternal Being—the Spring of Life—the Centre of Rest—the Stay of the Creation—the Fulness of all things. I join myself to Thee; with Thee I will lead my life, and spend my days, with whom I aim to dwell for ever, expecting, when my little time is over, to be taken up into Thine own eternity."

The end of the whole matter is, that the hand of the diligent maketh rich. It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing. The principles which operate for evil are urgent; and those which are designed to operate for good, should be plied with no less earnestness. The believer's energies should be concentrated on the acquisition of what is good and true—and it is in that path of steadfastness and progression that we best glorify God, the only wise and only good. There is a serpent in the heart deceiving, as there was a serpent in Eden of old—but how are his machinations to be counteracted? What is the antidote to his poison? The blood of the cross—and sprinkled therewith, the believer may be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

CHAPTER XX.

The Believer Rejoicing.

"There is a Morning Star, my soul!
There is a Morning Star!
'Twill soon be near and bright, though now
It seems so dim and far.
And when time's stars have come and gone,
And every mist of earth has flown,
That better Star shall rise
On this world's clouded skies—
To shine for ever.

The night is well-nigh spent, my soul!
The night is well-nigh spent!
And soon above our heads shall shine
A glorious firmament. . . . ."

BONAR.

The Believer Rejoicing.

Different temperaments of different men—The consequences in religion—The believer rejoicing—Examples—Samuel Rutherford—Colonel Gardiner—John Howe—Rev. C. Simeon—A contrast—The taciturn believer—Examples.

THE line which separates the purely spiritual from the natural in the believer's experience is often difficult to be drawn. That the distinction is essential and vital, is beyond all controversy; but to pronounce where the one begins and the other terminates, requires more than a mortal's discernment. The psychologist, on the one hand, may attempt his analysis, and the physiologist, on the other, may present the result of his investigations; but there is still much to baffle and bewilder, and much that lies beyond the ken and the scrutiny of man, in regard to the frequent blending and commingling of the spiritual and the physical in souls of different temperaments and habits, or even in the same soul at different periods, and in different conditions.

One of the specialties of Christian experience meets us in the case of those whose mental constitutions are ardent, sanguine, and excitable by nature. When religion in its grandeur becomes ascendant in such minds, the whole energy of the soul is let forth in the engrossing pursuit, or the rapt enjoyment, of the things of the Spirit. The spiritual elation, or the ecstasy of such minds transcends the comprehension, or raises the envy, or perhaps even provokes the incredulity and suspicion, of the more sedate and temperate believer. Such souls

live in a kind of rapture—at least they have not the changes which other men have. "It is good for us to be here;" or, "He hath done all things well;" or, "I will joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of my salvation,"—embodies their joyous convictions. Do they review the past? It is only to see the loving-kindness of the Lord like a golden thread pervading the whole. Do they forecast the future? It is only to declare that "though father and mother forsake them, the Lord will take them up." They are not merely cheerful—they can frequently exult. The pungency of contrition rarely shoots a single pang through the conscience. It is their lot to rejoice all the day. It is with them as with the lands where the summer is perennial, and where clouds never, or seldom, mar the serenity and the loveliness of the scene. Their own condition, or their acceptance with God, is never questioned. They appear to enjoy the full assurance of faith and hope; and the conviction that they are the Lord's, conducts them into his pavilion, where the beauties of holiness shine more and more brilliantly—at once attracting and delighting the soul. The conviction thus grows that God is the strength of their heart and their portion for ever, and they consequently sing in the ways of the Lord; they are constrained to "make his praise glorious."

Now, as ever happens, there is a large admixture of the physical in such manifestations of Christian experience. There is the man of calm and tranquil temperament. There is the man of ardour, and of glowing zeal. There is the man whose tendency is to despondency and gloom. And there is the man to whom all appears bright, like objects seen in sunshine—at least a rainbow irradiates the cloud. Now, when the soul of one who ranks in the last of these classes is touched by an influence from on high, and turned to such absorbing objects as God, eternity, heaven and its joys, or a Saviour's love, his death, and the glory which he revealed, we may expect his ardour to burn, and his hope to brighten, and his aspirations to glow and kindle like a torch in motion,

at the prospect set before him—and it is so. Of this class the most notable example is found in the case of Samuel Rutherford. He was tried and buffeted more than most of his contemporaries; for, as he sought to live righteously, he had to suffer persecution, and imprisonment and exile were his lot. Yet hear how seraphic were his sentiments amid all that might have crushed or quelled his heavenward soul. He was not merely kept in peace—his God was his song in the house of his pilgrimage; and his language frequently resembles that of one who had his foot upon the threshold of glory, rather than of one who laboured and was heavy laden under the cross which his persecutors gave him to carry. "Truly, pain of love-sickness for Jesus maketh me to think it long, long, long to the dawning of that day. Oh that He would cut short years, and months, and hours, and overleap time that we might meet!" "Alas! I cannot cause paper to speak the height, and breadth, and depth of Christ's love. I have not a balance to weigh the worth of my Lord Jesus. Heaven, ten heavens, would not be the beam of a balance to weigh him in." "Oh, if I had paper," he wrote to his parishioners from his house of bondage, Aberdeen, "If I had paper as broad as heaven and earth, and ink as the sea, and all the rivers and fountains of the earth, and were able to write the love, the worth, the excellency, the sweetness and due praises of our dearest and fairest Well-beloved; and then, if ye could read and understand it!" "When I am heavy and sad, one of his love-looks would do me much world's good. Oh, if ye would fall in love with him, how blessed were I! How glad would my soul be to help you to love him!" "Oh, if the world did but know what a smell the ointments of Christ cast, and how ravishing his beauty is, even the beauty of the fairest of the sons of men, and how sweet and powerful his voice is, the voice of that one Well-beloved!" "O damned souls! O miskenning (erring) world! O blind, O beggarly and pour souls! O bewitched fools! what aileth you at Christ that you run so from him?"

These are a few of Rutherford's most common exclamations, as soon as his heart is touched by his darling themes—the love, the beauty, and the glory of the Redeemer. Entranced, and rapt as if in seer's vision, his language labours and becomes turgid in its attempts to embody the emotions of his impassioned or seraphic mind. There are regions of the earth where the ardour of the sun often ignites the parched herbage, and then the scene is said to be inexpressibly grand as the blaze sweeps with more than a tempest's fury across the plains. Something like this occurs in the spiritual world. When a soul like that of Rutherford dwells on the glories and the excellencies of the Sun of Righteousness till it catches a portion of his fervour, it is swept along by a resistless power. The love of Christ constrains it —that is, does not permit it to rest—but it glows, and shines, and radiates, and seeks, like fire, to assimilate all to itself. Less impassioned Christians wonder at the rapt and energetic feelings of such believers. Now, they question the reality or the truth of such vehement emotions. Anon, they perhaps impute them to something else than purely spiritual affection; and only he who keeps in view at once the exceeding diversities of man's temperament and the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, as he dwells in the souls of believers, assigns to such enraptured, and soaring, and seer-like feelings, the place that is due to them according to the gospel of the grace of God. While the worldly and the formal affect to be disgusted or repelled, the simple-minded child of God often feels rebuked and humbled, and so stimulated to zeal and ardour in the faith.

But such rapt emotions are not confined to minds of the order to which Rutherford's belonged. It sometimes happens that even in the souls of the calm and judicious an experience like his may be found. On one occasion, Colonel Gardiner had spent a day in the society of a much-loved Christian friend. They had traversed some scenes of interest, where the loveliness of nature combined its attractions with the associations

of history; but amid them all, that brand plucked from the burning appeared to be reserved and incommunicative. His mind sought to dwell apart either in taciturnity or meditation—"the pomp of groves and garniture of fields," had no charms for him; and the reason he afterwards explained. He had felt his soul so much drawn out toward God, and so much engrossed by communion with him, that it was painful for him to hold intercourse with a fellow-creature. The things of God wore so much of the character of realities, that the things of earth faded into their native insignificance—they flitted, in fact, unobserved before the mind. It was a case like that of which we read in the text which says, "Ere ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." A man who was habitually calm and tranquil glowed with the fervour which brings glimpses or foreshadowings of the beatitudes of heaven—one in whom a sedate and sober judgment presided over the other powers, was lifted above the influence of earth, and brought into closer affinity with the things of the Spirit.

But a mind of a higher and more intellectual order still—we refer again to John Howe—has been visited by such joys. Once and again his soul was ravished as if by "a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays from the lofty throne of the divine Majesty." It was to him like a glimpse of the third heavens, and the remembrance of it went with him to the grave. The great sagacity, the calm judgment, and the majestic reason of Howe, put his experience beyond the reach of suspicion, and show that He who divides to all men as he will, refreshes, gladdens, and elates, not according to man's laws, but his own. And the Rev. Charles Simeon of Cambridge was a partaker of a similar joy. On one occasion he was so much overpowered with a sense of the divine favour to his soul, that he was unable to utter a word. After an interval of some length, he could break silence only with the words, "Glory, glory, glory!" *

* See his Life, 2d Edit., p. 100.

But in contrast with this, and to exhibit the truth more clearly, we may refer to the secretive and the taciturn believer. Instead of manifesting the fervour to which we have referred, such men rather repress and conceal their faith and feelings—they are godly, but it is in seclusion, and in the hidden recesses of their own heart. They have much of which they could tell, but it is immured in their own bosom—their right hand scarcely knows what the left is doing. They fear to be accounted hypocrites, and are therefore silent. We may perhaps add, of some who belong to this class, that they are reluctant to encounter the world's sneer, or its coldness, and therefore conceal their light instead of employing it to illuminate all around them. Or, they deem religion too sacred to be commonly referred to—nay, so much an affair between the soul and God, that it seems to encroach upon too holy precincts to make the state of the heart the topic of a single reference. "So great was his aversion to every thing bordering on the display of personal religion, that he never uttered a syllable to indicate what was passing within his own heart." "I cannot understand that religion which friends extort from people when they are dying, urging them to say, 'I believe,' and thinking it sufficient if they can be induced to declare that they have faith in Christ." "You must not think that because I have not *talked* of these things, therefore I have not *thought* of them." "Though I have not made a profession, it was not because I was *ashamed* of Christ. But what chiefly deterred me was, being so often shocked at the conduct of professors." "My principal hindrances were the inconsistencies of professing Christians. I have met with persons who could propose and approve measures from which I revolted."* Such are extracts from the history of one who eventually became a burning and a shining light. His own heart was chilled and repressed by what he saw around him; and though the misconduct of others should not have been his rule, but only the Word of

* The Christian Philosopher, &c., pp. 53, 54, 64, 85, 90.

the living God, we here find an explanation of what often happens—the concealment of religion in the heart, instead of letting our light shine before men, that others beholding our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Whenever the heart is right with God, the fervour, and the zeal, or the seraphic and enraptured flights of men like Rutherford, are always accompanied with genuine humility. Whatever comes from God, manifests its heavenly origin by laying man in the dust, preparatory to his occupying a throne in heaven;* and we ever see, that however ravished with the glory of Christ —however rapt into the third heavens—the true saint, like Rutherford, or Gardiner, or Howe, or Simeon, may be, the dust is still his bed—the lowest seat is always his selected place. As the believer can reconcile all paradoxes, and be sorrowing, yet always rejoicing—poor, yet making many rich—and dead, yet still alive —he knows how near akin the most elevating views of Christ are to lowly views of self. Indeed, that is the scriptural criterion of all religion. Is self abased?—Is the soul standing or kneeling near the Christian's Shekinah, the cross, where man finds so much reason for humility, and where God is so gloriously exalted? Then all is well. That soul may join the angels while announcing Christ in singing "glory to God in the highest" here, as it will "sing the song of Moses and the Lamb" hereafter. It may re-echo the words of Paul, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice."

* 1 Peter v. 6.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Courageous Christian.

"Ashamed of Jesus! sooner far
May evening blush to own a star!
He shed the beams of light divine
On this benighted soul of mine.

Ashamed of Jesus! just as soon
Let midnight be ashamed of noon!
'Twas midnight with my soul till he,
Bright Morning Star, bade darkness flee.

Ashamed of Jesus! yes I may
When I've no guilt to wash away;
No tears to dry, no good to crave,
No fear to quell,—no soul to save."

GREGG.

The Courageous Christian.

Courage, a Christian grace—The need of it—The reasons—Examples—The duellist—The Earl of W——, Lord P——.—The martyr—Margaret Wilson—The martyr's feelings analyzed—The martial phrases of the New Testament—The blessedness of decision—The relief which it brings.

THERE can be little doubt that when Peter says, "Add to your faith virtue," he means add to it *courage*. Ἀρετή is derived from Ἄρης, the name of Mars, the heathen god of war; and thus, etymologically, it means the virtue which was most signally prized by the martial nations of antiquity—courage, boldness, intrepidity. Grotius, Hammond, Whitby, Benson, Doddridge, Scott, and others, who have given their days and their nights to the elucidation of Scripture, adopt this interpretation of ἀρετή, and understand the apostle as directing those to whom he wrote to add courage to the parent grace of faith—courage to assert it, and defend all the graces which flow from it, as embodied in the catalogue or chain which Peter has recorded.

And the experienced believer knows, that in a world like this, no grace is more needed than the grace of courage. It is needed immediately after faith comes into exercise; for no sooner does man begin to turn from folly to wisdom, from self to the Saviour, and from sin to God, than fortitude is required. He needs it to abandon his old associates, for that demands a high degree of heroism. He must be a bold man to break off his former habits, and adopt others entirely different and

new. He must be, in some degree, a hero to take up his cross and follow Christ. But the need of the grace of courage becomes more apparent still, when we call to mind the fact, that just when the great transition is made—when the contrast between his past and present life becomes apparent—the young believer is most apt to be assailed by the sneers and the taunts of his former associates. It is just at the turning point—it is when he has only yesterday crossed the margin which separates life from death, that the Christian most requires to be a hero; and it is accordingly just at that point that Peter places the grace that is so much required—first faith, and immediately thereafter courage to defend it. Who, that can look back on the period of his conversion, does not remember his need of this grace amid the assaults which he had to encounter, and the ordeal through which he had to pass, from the cowardice of his own deceitful heart, and that fear of man which brings a snare? And who does not remember—perhaps with the blush of self-condemnation on his cheek, or the pang of contrition in his heart—that that ordeal did not leave him unscathed, because the grace of courage, which is the appointed defender of the faith, had not yet been cultivated? There was the sinful compliance; there was the outrage offered to conscience; there was truth concealed; there was, in effect, the equivocation perpetrated; there was the attack parried, rather than boldly confronted; there was, in short, sin contracted afresh, and the Saviour in a measure denied—all because faith was weak in itself, and because there was not yet at its side the appointed defender—the armour-bearer, the guardian and protector of faith—in itself the weakest, though relatively the strongest, of all the Christian graces.

But while this is often the case in the believer's experience, when just turning into the narrow way, it has not seldom happened that he has become signalized by the grace of courage as he advanced in his pilgrimage; and so remarkable has it made some Christians, that it

demands a separate consideration among the countless diversities of Christian experience.

There are many, then, who name the name of Christ, but never stand decidedly out as the devoted followers of the Lamb. Like the fabled chameleon, they take on the complexion of the company in which they happen to be. They would blush to offend it, though in pleasing it they may offend their God. With the worldly, they are worldly; with the godly, they can wear an aspect of godliness. Conscience may tell that they should be decided, but the fear of man haunts and enfeebles. They halt, and hesitate, and design, but never accomplish. They continue plastic and passive, and speedily establish a character as belonging to the class who are neither cold nor hot. Even when conscience whispers that God should be honoured though all men should frown, it is silenced or pushed aside by some ready-made excuse. But different from these, there are some who are all for God from the moment of their conversion. They refuse to tolerate aught which they believe to be opposed to his holy mind. They see clearly the broad gulf which should separate the believer from the formalist, or the church from the world. That gulf they would neither fill up nor bridge over; they would maintain, without abatement or compromise, the heaven-appointed distinction between God and Mammon; between Christ and Belial, or conversion and unconversion. They would do nothing to outrage a brother, but neither would they offend God for a brother's sake. They enter with all the heart into the Saviour's discriminating words, "Let the dead bury their dead; follow thou me." Their nature is moulded upon the sharp distinction, "He that is not with me is against me;" and, with opinions based upon such maxims, they are decided, resolute, and courageous. They follow the Lord fully; they act somewhat in the spirit of him who said, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I," and thus they add to their faith the courage required by the apostle.

This guardian grace is sometimes seen in the young

Christian—young, we mean, as regards the new birth, though perhaps hoary-headed as a citizen of this world. He remembers so well the fearful pit and the miry clay from which he has just been rescued, that he feels he cannot dwell too far from its borders. He strenuously opposes whatever would entice him back to the precincts of peril. He thus frequently puts to shame his seniors in the faith; and not only so, but moreover does what he has the power and the means to do in rescuing others from the danger which he has escaped. While some are timid and shrinking, and calculating consequences, and afraid of the world's frown, he is fearless and resolute. Some he would "save with fear, pulling them out of the fire;" others he would attract and allure—but "by all means he would save some." We know a soldier who was converted in India, and who has since that period been the instrument of converting not a few. Soon after the decisive change was produced, and the wasting brand rescued, he could not refrain from reproving his commanding officer for the oaths which he heard him utter on parade. It was obeying God rather than man. It was Christian courage "rebuking a brother, and not suffering sin upon him,"—though for his faithfulness, F—— was threatened with the halberds, and punishment by martial law.

One of the best descriptions of this resolution which the Scriptures supply is found in 2 Cor. vii. 11. Paul had written to the church to rebuke certain vicious practices which had crept in. Sorrow was the result of the correction, and he thus refers to the zeal which his letter of remonstrance had evoked:—"Behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" No words can more vividly depict the determination of true Christians than these—indignation, vehement desire, zeal, yea, revenge against sin, were all produced by that godly sorrow which Paul had occasioned.

There was no tampering with the abominable thing. There was no attempt to palliate or disguise it by the question, "Is it not a little one?" It was honestly investigated. It was resolutely put away. It was boldly confronted and assailed by men who had imbibed the spirit of Him who said, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." Such decision, were it common, would expurgate the church from countless blemishes, and make it stronger against the world than it has been for three hundred years.

Yet there is need of caution as well as courage in the Christian life, and the case of Peter himself is recorded as a beacon, or a warning. None more bold than he in asserting what he felt; but his boldness was not always backed by other not less needed graces, and we know how far he fell. There was sometimes zeal without knowledge, and courage without faith. It is not natural impetuosity of temperament that is meant by the Christian grace of courage. It is not that forward spirit which is at once rash in action and harsh in judging. It is not that uncalculating and hap-hazard spirit, which so often guides man into danger, but has no resources by which to extricate him unscathed. The only wise God has not attached the seal of his sanction to our going to war without calculating the force of the adversary—and the courageous Christian is, therefore, one who has steadfastly looked at difficulty or danger—who knows where to get strength to face it all—who remembers that the Lord is a sun and shield, a buckler and a high tower—that He teaches our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, and undertakes to make us more than conquerors over all that would injure the soul. "He who trusteth in his own heart is a fool," is the verdict of infinite wisdom; and the Christian hero is therefore strong in the Lord, and the power of his might.

Think of the duellist, farther to illustrate this point. He is deemed courageous, and is eulogized by the world in that character. It is to escape the charge of cowardice that he declares by his practice that he is ready

to perpetrate a double murder in one—his own and that of his fellow-mortal. Now, what is the motive which leads, or rather goads, man to this perpetration? When the Earl of W——, or Lord P——, went out each to aim at the life of a brother of mortality, and pled some flimsy reasons for that step, notwithstanding their religious profession, what was the fallacy which swayed them? How were they blinded to the real character of the transaction? Fleeing from the world's charge of cowardice, they proved that they were very cowards still, for they were timid and crouching before the breath of man, though they were bravadoes against the Omnipotent. They could not brook a false imputation from a fellow-mortal, but they could rush on the bosses of Jehovah's buckler. They would not allow their fair fame to be sullied by a breath; and rather than that, they would put man upon Jehovah's throne. They did not scruple to defile their conscience by a deed which might have precipitated them into the presence of the Holy One with a right hand red with the blood of a brother,—all because they were afraid of their fellow-men, or had not heroism enough to leave malignity to do its utmost, or man's false aspersions to pass away disregarded.

But there is another kind of courage which we wish to place in contrast with this—the courage of the martyr. There is a little girl, about thirteen years of age, dragged by ruthless persecutors to the spot where she is to die. She is tied to a stake within flood-mark, on the shores of the Bay of Wigton. There Margaret Wilson must perish, because she would not pray at the dictation of others, or acknowledge that the king had any right to rule in the church of the Redeemer. Had she said, "*God save the king,*" in the sense which others meant, she would have escaped her horrid torture and her watery grave. But she would die first. Truth was precious—it was worth her life—and she would not acknowledge the king's supremacy in spiritual things, even by a prayer which might have been misconstrued.

She saw her aged companion suffocated before her, but that did not damp her simple, soaring spirit. She declined all compromise, and was therefore thrust into the water by a remorseless soldiery and drowned. She had just declared that "it was not she and her companion that suffered, but Christ in them." That conviction—one of the realizings of faith—nerved her arm, and emboldened her youthful heart, and she died a martyr indeed in the cause of Him who is the truth. Now, that was a courage such as the butchers of the battlefield seldom know—Marengo and Waterloo can furnish no records of such holy heroism.

And whence this courage in maintaining a truth so often spurned? What led that tender girl to brave the watery ordeal—to see her aged companion in tribulation perish before her eyes, and yet maintain her purpose undaunted—her allegiance to Christ unbroken? She had added courage to her faith, by the grace of God given to her. The strength of God was made perfect in her weakness. All her springs were in the Saviour, and she accordingly stands out as a hero indeed. In contrast with her, the world's idolized and chivalrous men are cowardly and base. "Though every hair of my head were a man, I would die all those deaths for Christ and his cause," cried a dying martyr of the same period; and that sentiment embodies at once the secret and the strength of a believer's heroism. He fears God, and has no other fear. He feels that God is near, and what can man do then? The body may perish—let it—if the soul be safe. Man may gloom, but God in Christ is smiling; and as the man of faith enters on this conflict, he is through grace so firmly bent on victory, that his cry is, "With your shield or on it," in a nobler sense than Spartan mother ever knew.

We are often struck with the multitude of military phrases which occur in revealing the religion of the Prince of Peace. We are to "put on the whole armour of God," and "fight the good fight of faith," and "earnestly contend for the faith," and "take the sword of

the Spirit," and "follow the Captain of our salvation," and "war a good warfare," and "quit us like men," and at last be "more than conquerors." Now, there is a meaning in all this—to be a Christian indeed, demands courage springing from faith, and they are blessed who are thus raised above the enslaving and degrading "fear of man." In this respect, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and could men but perceive how one decided stand—how one bold and manly confession, would often emancipate them from all that fetters and enthrals, they would hasten to purchase their manumission by a firm, unflinching resolution. The vulture will not consort with the dove, nor the wolf with the lamb, except to devour it; and as soon as the ungodly discover that we are by the grace of God manfully resolved to resist them, in love, yet with firmness, they will cease to haunt us. They will be awed by the very resolution at which they affect to sneer. They may perhaps be reclaimed to the obedience of the just, when they see a consistent believer adding courage to his faith, and then gathering the other Christian graces round his soul, as the flowers of summer at once embellish and enrich the earth.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Intellectual Christian—His Danger.

"O Saviour, whose mercy, severe in its kindness,
Has chastened my wanderings and guided my way;
Adored be the power which illumined my blindness,
And weaned me from phantoms which smiled to betray.

Enchanted with all that was dazzling and fair,
I followed the rainbow, I caught at the toy;
And still in displeasure thy goodness was there,
Disappointing the hope and defeating the joy."

SIR R. GRANT.

ing to what the Scriptures say of a believer's heart. It is the understanding existing in the conditions ascribed to the Christian understanding by the Spirit of God. It is the will moving in harmony with the laws by which it should be regulated, according to the revelation of Jehovah's mind. It is, in short, the whole man rejoicing, lamenting, hoping, fearing, aspiring, doing, suffering, all according to the mind of the Supreme, as unfolded in his unerring Word. Now, it will at once be seen, that there is much in the life even of some earnest Christians which cannot be brought under this definition or description of experience; for there is often very much that is in direct opposition to the will of God. There is the prevalence of unbelief, declining to accept of the gospel—and that can be no ingredient in Christian experience, in any proper sense. There is the morbid and self-consuming spirit of the legal—and neither is that possessed of aught that is properly Christian. It is rather the mind in a state of disease, than the mind guided to the dwellings in which, David says, "the melody of joy and health is heard." There is the overwrought and feverish excitement which signalizes some minds at seasons of awakening and revival. Neither can that be comprehended in any right definition of Christian experience. In short, the experience of a Christian is one thing; but Christian experience may be a widely different thing. With the former, much ignorance or error may mingle from time to time—in the latter, there can be nothing but what is according to the mind of Christ; it is the living epistle of the Lord Jesus; and were this distinction carefully kept in view, it would often preserve the truth from being injured in the house of a friend, as well as deliver the soul from the error of supposing that its condition may be right and safe while declining to close with God's offer of mercy, or mixing up the divine specific against sin and misery with man's own corruptions, his errors, and perversions of the simple truth.

The peculiarity, then, to which we would here refer,

in regard to Christian experience, may be called the experience of the intellectual man. That the intellect should hold a prominent place in our religion, as in all that man finds to do, only fanaticism will question. Every gift of God is good; and, while consecrated to his service, a powerful intellect, far from conflicting with spirituality of mind, may supply grand materials, on which the soul may ruminate and grow strong, or ascend to those lofty regions to which only the few can soar. To pronounce a divorce, as some have done, between intellect and godliness, and assume a necessary union between feeble mental faculties and the faith of God's people, is to injure religion and outrage the order of things. It is the declaration of Paul, that he "would pray with the Spirit, and pray with the understanding also—he would sing with the Spirit, and sing with the understanding also;" and the same should be the determination of all who know that the religion of the God of truth is adapted to the whole man, and is meant to subdue and spiritualize our faculties, not to extirpate or overlay them.

On the other hand, however, while some would displace the intellect, or look with suspicion on its use in religion, others would allow it too prominent a sphere, and this is never done without detriment to the power and ascendency of spiritual truth in the soul. It is clearly the mind of God, that the most gifted in point of intellect cannot penetrate into the mysteries of the spiritual kingdom by any self-derived strength. The very attempt to do so implies a misapprehension of one of the first principles of the oracles of God; for here the gifted and the feeble are utterly on a level. If it be true that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost;" if it be "not by wisdom, nor by might, but by the Spirit" of the living God, that all saving truth is known—then the attempt to know it by mortal power implies direct antagonism to revelation. The mystery hid from ages continues hidden still from the wise and the prudent, while it is often revealed unto

babes; and the oblivion of this leads, we repeat, to spiritual detriment, or often to shipwreck in the faith.

We need only glance at the condition of the churches to see illustrations of this. When the intellectual preponderates in the mind of men, even though conversion may have taken place, it is not uncommon to notice a coldness—almost a scepticism—on the subject of vital godliness, as the Scriptures describe it, or as the heart of the Spirit-taught Christian rejoices over it. Religion is regarded rather as a thing to be judged than submitted to—rather as a subject on which to exercise ingenuity, than a system designed to permeate and sway the whole heart and soul, and strength and mind. It is mainly objective in its character; its truths are studied with the calmness or the coldness which characterises the manipulations of the algebraist, not with the earnestness which becomes us when life or death for ever is at stake; and it has happened, within the range of our own observation, that men of this class, who had given trustworthy reasons to believe that they were indeed converted and transformed by the renewing of their minds, were suspected of being merely nominal Christians, by some more ardent and sanguine followers of the Lamb. We do not refer at present to that pitiable error by which some are led astray, and are inflated by the idea of their intellectual superiority—so that nothing but an intellectual gospel, and intellectual grace, and intellectual spirituality, were such combinations of words not utterly incongruous, can meet the high demands of their minds. These are the great swelling words of the intellectually vain, which indicate too surely that the character of the model disciple * is not yet theirs,—they are at once to be suspected as ranking amongst those who are without. But we refer to men of whom something more than charity bids us believe that they have passed from death to life; and some such we know who are suspected of being still in the gall of bitterness, because of the coldness which charac-

* Matt xv.ii. 3.

terises their religion. It may have the steadfastness of principle; but it imparts no impulse—it generates no warmth. It resembles a cold winter scene, whose chief decorations are icicles or hoar frost, rather than the green and goodly scenes which greet the eye when the Sun of righteousness is shining, and his genial heat, if not his glowing fervour, is felt in the soul.

Place such a believer in a pulpit. He will announce dogmas as accurate perhaps as the mathematics; but as cold, and as remotely related to spiritual *life*. He may reason like Butler, or criticise like Bentley; but the whole tends to chill rather than to generate a healthful glow—it is as if the Scriptures did not contain the words, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." In brief, there may be light shining; but it is not into the heart. No irradiation reaches it. All is cold, cheerless, unattractive; and unless God had provided some better thing for us, the understanding might have been stored, but the heart would never have been warmed, roused, impelled. Who has not seen such a preacher, environed perhaps by not a few like-minded hearers—dragging, perhaps, the Word of God to the tribunal of man's judgment, and rejecting or receiving at the bidding of the intellect of man—not as we are taught by the Spirit of the living God? Many are weak and sickly among us, and some sleep, because of this tendency and tone.

Or place such a man by a deathbed side. Is the dying one unprepared to meet his God? How unfit is the merely intellectual believer, when his own soul is not glowing with love—but rather chilled by a species of formality—to rouse, to urge, to persuade! Or is the dying one a child of God? Is the land Beulah in sight? Is the soul hovering on wing to be there? How unfit are those in whom the merely intellectual element preponderates, either to sympathise in the joys, or to comprehend the aspirations of the departing spirit! All that he can advance is felt to be vapid and unavailing, and it is well if he do not rank those prelibations of

heaven, which are sometimes granted to the dying believer, among the results of enthusiasm. It is the heart-felt and the Spirit-produced that is adapted to such an occasion. The merely intellectual, however correct, consistent, and formally scriptural, can only put lead upon the wings of the soaring spirit. "Heart-light," one has said, "is life-light; warm, fervent, kindling others. Mere intellectual light is cold, pale, unattractive."

There is no lack of materials in the history of the church, or the biographies of Christians, from which to illustrate these remarks. In our day, few in the rank of private Christians have held a more signal place than Mary Jane Graham, at least she takes rank among the most intellectual of female religionists.* She was the subject of early religious impressions, and describes in very vivid language the mode in which they were produced and deepened. She was convinced of sin—fell as thousands do into legalism, and tried to prepare herself for being saved—but after many fruitless efforts in that direction, was brought at last to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." "Who can describe the raptures," she writes, "which filled the bosom of that little child—herself—when made to comprehend that 'the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin?' Now she fled to Jesus indeed. Now she knew that he had loved her, and given himself for her. . . . . She held sweet converse with her reconciled God and Father; and gladly would she have quitted this life to go and dwell with Jesus. . . . . Free grace, free mercy (after seventeen years of mingled happiness and pain), are all her song." Yet this believer, so gifted and so rejoicing, fell from her steadfastness, and actually sank into the dark and dreary regions of infidelity. And how did she fall? How did a mind so discerning become eclipsed? What was it that blotted out the experience of the past, as well as the convictions of the

* See a memoir of Miss Mary Jane Graham, late of Stoke-Fleming, Devon. By the Rev. Charles Bridges, M.A.

present? The instructive reply is, that Mary Jane Graham, elated by personal acquirements, gave herself up to intellectual pursuits; these, because misdirected, induced a spirit of self-dependence, and that again enticed her to put away or nauseate the simplicity of the gospel. After all that she had felt and enjoyed, she went back to the frivolities of earth—she ceased to walk humbly with her God—she minded high things, and her proud look went before a fall. The world's giddy whirl, and intellectual pursuits, such as female minds are rarely braced for, overlaid the simple truth. The divinity of Christ became "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." She was left, she says, to stumble on the dark mountains, because she had forgotten or abandoned the simplicity of the little child, and had affected the power and achievements of those whose great swelling words of vanity proclaim that they are far removed from sound philosophy, and farther still from the Holy Spirit's religion.

Now, all this was the result of consulting another wisdom than that of the only wise God. Miss Graham at first received the truth in simplicity, and was made glad thereby. But she put away her simplicity—in doing so she put away her religion also—and thus all was eclipsed—she dwelt again very near the region of the shadow of eternal death. She *was* reclaimed from the error of her ways, but it was by a process and a training such as made her walk tenderly with God, until she passed from earth to the dwelling-place of the redeemed. She had, like all the vain, persuaded herself that she was "wise, though born like a wild ass's colt;" and, ere she was tamed into submission, had to pass through an ordeal such as God has prepared only for his children.

Dr Samuel Johnson will furnish another example of the intellectual man's shortcomings or errors in religion. His powers, none will question—and his clear discernment upon innumerable topics, is commonplaced among the certainties of English literature. And yet how far

he fell short of comprehending the simple truth, all can tell who know his history on the one hand, and the religion of the Spirit or the Scriptures on the other. For thirty years he continued habitually to pray for his departed wife,* and such records as the following are common in his diary: "I remembered that it was my wife's dying day, and begged pardon for all our sins, and commended her"—"The time is again come, at which, since the death of my poor, dear wife, on whom God have mercy, I have annually commemorated the mystery of redemption." At the very time when that man of wondrous power was praying to be guided and upheld by the Spirit of God, he was thus deliberately, and from year to year, violating one of the simplest truths of revelation. Even his capacious intellect could not cast off the power of superstition. It clung to him in spite of all human light or human power, and it perpetuated or deepened the gloom of a mind rarely disposed to be cheerful. It brings unspeakable joy to that heart which loves the souls of others, to know that a period of enlargement and emancipation came, ere his spirit returned to the God who gave it. "Believe me," he said to his physician shortly before his death, "there is no salvation but in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God;" and in his will, "I offer up my soul full of pollution, but also full of assurance that it will be cleansed in the blood of the Redeemer." But even he must be added to the long catalogue of those in whom an ascendent intellect was permitted to mar the simple truth, and hinder the joy which that truth would diffuse through the soul.

Archdeacon Paley may be mentioned as an example of the intellectual Christian in another point of view. He has been eulogised as the very type or model of the sagacious English mind. Discerning, though not acute —perspicacious and intelligent, though not original or grasping, Paley has constructed more than one argument in defence of religion, both natural and revealed, which no hostility, however inveterate, will ever over-

* See his Prayers and Meditations, *passim*.

throw. Dealing with facts and principles, he had power to discover their full argumentative value, and assign to them their right argumentative position. But what are the products of that sagacious mind when brought to bear upon spiritual things? How did he, as a minister of religion, at one period of his life, reason concerning some of the weightier matters of revelation—not the defences, but the things to be defended—not the outworks, but the citadel—not the temple, but the shrine? He erred to an extent which even Christian childhood would deplore. "It is manifest," he says in recommending caution in the use and application of scriptural language—"it is manifest that no change equal or similar to the conversion of a heathen can be experienced by us, or by one educated in a Christian country, and to whom the facts, precepts, and hopes of Christianity have been from his infancy familiar." In other words, this man, who could with such sagacity and power defend what is written, had not learned its meaning. He did not understand, when he wrote these words, that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." He limited to one age the meaning of the words, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." He argued, in effect, that a very large proportion of the Scriptures was given only to the times in which the Saviour and his apostles dwelt on earth. In other words, Dr Paley furnishes another instance of the inability of man's mind, in its most vigorous development, to comprehend the simple truths which the Spirit teaches; another evidence that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It is gladdening to know that Paley, like Johnson, saw the light which shines from heaven, before he passed from earth; but it was not by a grasping intellect or great sagacity that it was descried.

On such a subject as the peculiarities of an intellectual Christian, it would be wrong to omit a reference to Blaise Pascal. Whatever the human mind is capable of

performing, his could achieve; and he ranks side by side with Galileo, Torricelli, or even Newton, among "the starry lights" which shed their radiance upon man. Yet all his mental power was unable to carry him forward to a spot of spiritual repose; he could not rise above the deadening influence of Popery, so far as to enjoy the liberty with which Christ makes free. He had wit and eloquence enough to discomfit the Jesuits; he commanded the respect even of Voltaire; he won the eulogy of D'Alembert; but he had not rightly apprehended the first principles of the gospel of the grace of God. Enfeebled by superstition, not enlightened by religion, even Pascal was the victim of austerities worthy only of some poor ascetic. He denied himself the most ordinary comforts of life, as if that were religion which is only self-righteousness; and not only so, but he wore beneath his clothes a girdle of iron, with sharp points of the same metal, which he struck with his elbow as soon as he felt any pleasurable sensation, to drive the iron more deeply into his lacerated sides. It is thus that Romanism bows down the mightiest minds—thus that it trains them to act, as if the work of Christ were not finished; and thus, finally, that we see, in this conspicuous case, how ineffectual are the noblest powers of man, unaided by the grace of God, to grasp the very first principles of the oracles of Heaven.

Another instance of the deleterious effects of yielding to the ascendancy of intellect in religion, as if it could accomplish what only God's Spirit can achieve, is found in the case of Robert Hall. For years after that gifted man became a minister of religion, his views of the Spirit's work were rather those of a Sabellian than of the Word of God. He believed, indeed, in the need of spiritual agency both to transform and sanctify man; but it was a mere power, or a mere influence, not the Holy Spirit—in other words, he doubted the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Ghost. Listening rather to his own theorizings than humbly acquiescing in the teaching of God, he adopted and held

for a time the views which heresy promulgates, instead of embracing the simple truth which Jehovah has revealed. He was led at last, fully, cordially, and most distinctly, to adopt that truth; for growing acquaintance with the Word of God, with the wants of man, and with his own heart, guided to that result; but Robert Hall was thirty-six years of age, and had been twelve or fifteen years a minister, before "he included the personality of the Holy Spirit in his statements of the doctrine of spiritual influence."* It was a mind of colossal power and marvellous eloquence, unable to fathom the depths which Christian simplicity, led by God's Spirit, could have with ease explored. It is by that Spirit, and not by any native power, that men take rank, in the lofty sense, among

> "The dead but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns."

—The power which flashed a universe into being, and continues by a simple volition to sustain it, is not less needed for these ends than it is to spiritualize or elevate the soul of man,—that spirit which "cleaves to the dust," as if it were from earth and not from heaven.†

It is not, then, always to the most gifted and intellectual that God over all imparts the highest influence or the greatest ascendency for good. The remark is illustrated by the case of the Rev. Charles Simeon. During the half century of his residence and labours at Cambridge, not a few who were far his superiors in scientific and scholar-like attainments ranked among the members of the university. One might have walked amid the gardens of King's College, of Trinity and St John's, during Simeon's day, and seen, amid their alleys, and cloisters, and academic retreats, men whose names have penetrated wherever British science has reached, yet to none of these has it been granted to produce such effects upon

* Gregory's Life of Hall, Works, vol. vi. p. 56

† It were easy to multiply examples here from living men, or men but lately dead. Schleiermacher and hundreds more in Germany, and the school which is importing so much from Germany, into the *Catholic Series*, and similar productions, are instances.

their own and coming generations as was the case with Simeon. With mental powers scarcely higher than the average of educated men, he yet wielded an influence which can scarcely be overrated. He lived down bitter hostility on the part of ungodly men. He turned ribaldry into confidence, and enmity into love. He bound hundreds to him by a spell-like power. In spite of many peculiarities, consisting of extreme fervour, an energy sometimes bordering upon extravagance, and a boldness which might appear rashness, he succeeded in subduing many, and linking them to him by bonds which could not be severed. He did much to awaken a dormant church, and hand down to other ages the blessings which he had secured for his own. Yet all this was accomplished without profound erudition, without deep science, without commanding powers. It was the force of goodness—it was the dominion of truth—it was the authority of God's religion, awing, subduing, taming men. These enabled Simeon to rise superior to all assaults. Like Samson, he extracted honey from the dead lion, though not by the force of over-mastering gifts, yet by the melting influence of grace. It was God honoured, and therefore honouring. It was man's pride abased, and the Lord alone exalted. When that is done in spirit and truth, what achievement is too great even for the weak and lowly mind?*

But there is another way in which we can exhibit the danger to which the intellectual Christian is exposed. Elated by the pride of intellect and that knowledge which inflates, such men are often tempted to cast away the simplicity of their faith. They reject some of the central doctrines of revelation, as if the truth of God were to be tried at man's tribunal, instead of man being tried by it; and there have been many signal illustrations of this danger. Both the Old and the New World have rung, for instance, with the intelligence of a murder committed by an accomplished man, who, though he ranked high in science, yet cherished the

* See Simeon's Life, 2d edition, p. 846.

ferocity of the tiger, combined with the cunning of the serpent. He had adopted that corruption of Christianity which consists in denying the divinity of the Saviour—that is, he held a creed which elates the pride of man by constituting him his own Saviour, if a Saviour be needed at all. At the bidding of a proud intellect, he had discarded the truth of God, and then he plunged into an abyss of crime, which scarcely a Red Indian's ingenious cruelty can match. Felony was first committed. To conceal that, murder followed,—a murder the most secret, perhaps, that ever dyed the hands of man. Then the victim was consumed, inch by inch, by means of acids, corrosives, the fire, and the knife; in short, by all the means which scientific skill could suggest. And when detected, one solemn farce after another, in the form of a confession, was enacted, in the hope of purchasing a pardon by raising commiseration. Lies were uttered by the criminal to-day, to be contradicted by himself to-morrow. We say nothing of the causes which led to this atrocity, its prelude, or precursors. We point to the crime of Dr Webster, only to show how far man will go astray when he puts his own intellect in the place of God's Spirit—how very true it is that all the attainments of science, and all the alleged humanizing effects of literature, are as feeble against the heart of man as a thread of gossamer to bind a ravening lion. Such a crime proclaims aloud, in the hearing of all who have ears to hear, that no atrocity is too gross, or no aberration too monstrous, for man, while human appliances or human checks are all that stand between him and guilt.

And let it not be thought that there is aught in the highest intellectual gifts which necessarily conflicts with lowliest reverence at the foot of the cross. These gifts, in combination with an impure life, like that led by Lord Byron, may turn the inner man, however gifted, into an incarnate antagonist to the holy and the true; but that is not in consequence of the exercise of these gifts, but of their abuse. Who more gifted, for example,

than Johann August Wilhelm Neander, and yet who more profoundly submissive to the truth which centres in the cross, and radiates from it in spiritual light upon the soul? He had, it is true, to grope his way from the formalities of Judaism to the truth as it is in Jesus. Midway he tried to find rest for his weary soul amid the idealisms of Plato, and thought he could thence extract something to satisfy the insatiable yearnings of his awakened spirit. But "miserable comforters are ye all," was the conviction forced on him at last. After wandering amid the shadows and symbols of Judaism, he found repose for his soul in the truth brought from the bosom of Godhead by Jesus of Nazareth. What was before written in hieroglyphics was now decyphered. The two grand mysteries of our world—sin and suffering—were solved; and the lofty aspirations of Neander's soul, his deep and lonely meditations, all led to the cross, not by any native or inherent power, but because the aching void, the craving, the yearning within, was such, that nothing but the God whom the cross so gloriously reveals could satisfy it. Reason and its demands, experience and its joys, there blend in harmony; and the soul gives utterance to its emotions in the language of him who, next to the Crucified One, spake as never man did, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

The warping effects of intellectual pursuits, when not kept in subordination to the Word of God, might be illustrated in a thousand other cases. These effects explain the aberrations of the heresiarch. They enable us to understand why many among the young go astray from "the old paths," when just entering on a religious life. They furnish a key to Socinianism, and all the corruptions of Christianity which pamper the pride, instead of humbling the heart, of man. And, in the sight of these things, surely we may say, that "in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird;" with such warnings before us, we should surely learn not to be high-minded. The worshippers of intellect have the understanding

too often darkened at last, and the conscience judicially seared. They who suppose that the power of man can master, or that the line of man can fathom, what only the Spirit of God can explore or explain, will sooner or later be brought low; and happy is the man who has learned to sit down in meek docility, saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." The divine book for the soul, and the divine work in the soul, are not merely connected or corelative—they are in spirit or in essence one. Yet we do not call on man to abuse or annihilate his understanding, but only to consecrate or to baptize it; for the baptism of the Spirit will enroll us among those of whom we read, that "a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit," or "a man of understanding will draw out counsel."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Christian under the Cross.

"O miracle stupendous of vast love!
O deadness of man's heart that still remains!
To die for you, your God comes from above:
Ye will not walk with him to share his pains.

It is Thy Cross alone, alone Thy Cross,
From everlasting flames our souls sets free:
Chasten us with fire, or sword, or worldly loss,
But spare us for a long eternity."

OLD HYMN.

The Christian under the Cross.

The diversity of trials—Their origin—And results—Examples—Sir Andrew Agnew, Bart.—J—— M——,—A—— W——,—Elizabeth Lindsay.

It is the fine sentiment of a living poet, regarding one of whom the world was not worthy:—

"O, gentle in thy firmness still,
Who ever moved thy steadfast will,
Or chafed thy patient mood?
Bearing a blessing in thine hand,
The banner of thy God's command,
While surging passions swell and toss,
Calm in the presence of the cross,
For evil rendering good."*

To be calm in the presence of the cross, is not always the lot even of the child of God; but let us contemplate the power of grace in some of its manifestations, as sustaining the heavily-burdened believer.

Every one has noticed the inexhaustible variety of trials which assail those who are pilgrims and strangers here, coming all from Him of whom we read, "Is there evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" They first spread out into countless ramifications through the Christian's life, and then they all converge upon the one grand result—meetness for glory through the Spirit of grace. There is one saint—he is strong, vigorous, athletic, and busy planning some enterprise for good. His God, however, lays him low, chains him to a sick-bed, and perhaps renders him dependent on

* "The Nineteenth of April," a poem on the death of Sir A. Agnew, by Mrs A. Stuart Menteath, in his Memoirs.

the hand of another for the morsel, or the cordial, which sustains him. There is another—around him there were gathered rejoicing friends, and not a few found their gladness in his smile, or made his heart happier by the happiness of theirs. But death enters his home—it rifles away one, and perhaps another, and perhaps another, till he is left alone of all that happy group. We have seen two aged believers alone in the world, desolate and bare, like trees blighted by lightning, after laying ten out of eleven children in the grave, while the misdoings of the prodigal survivor seemed to occasion a more poignant anguish than the deaths of all the ten. It was thus that sin was made bitter—that earth was proved to be the place of our exile, and heaven the only home of the soul.

Or, in a third instance, we may see anguish at once intense and gloomy occasioned by spiritual trial. From some disturbing cause, faith has ceased to be simple; the eye is turned inward upon the hidden man of the heart, rather than outward to behold that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; and as nothing can be found *within* but what is polluted, and unfit to bear even the scrutiny of conscience, far less that of God, sorrow often settles on the soul like the shadow of a dark thunder-cloud. It wanders in the valley of the shadow of death, till perhaps it begins to fear that there never was sorrow like its.

Or, perhaps, the cross is laid on the believer by those of his own household. He has decided to be for God, and remembers that the whole world would be bought too dear were his soul the price. Eternity is one reality to him—sin is another—God is another; and under the combined influence of these things, he resolves to cast in his lot among God's peculiar people. But at this stage hostility often commences, and the child of God begins to understand why the Saviour of the lost so often spoke of taking up the cross and following him. Worldly kindred throw impediment after impediment in the way. Seriousness is called melancholy. The

fear of God is assailed as hypocrisy. Earnestness about the soul is vituperated as enthusiasm. The very religion which God's Spirit teaches is spoken of as fanaticism; while forsaking the world is reviled as equivalent to uttering the offensive words, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou." The zealous study of the Bible is regarded as being righteous overmuch, and a series of chafing and irritating annoyances thus await the child of God which in their sum amount to persecution. It becomes all too manifest that these words are full of meaning, "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"

Now, by all these and other endless varieties of the cross, God is just ripening his people for glory. Patience is to have its perfect work, and men are to count it all joy when they fall into divers trials. Either in a gentle whisper or a voice of thunder, God is saying, "Prepare to come up hither." When is it that the power of the only wise God is most signally felt? When his people are at the weakest, and the most lowly. When is it that the Man of sorrows is most prized, or the Spirit the Comforter most honoured? It is when our trials are greater than we can bear. When is holiness most advanced? It is when the child of God is in the furnace, for the Son of God is ever nearest then, as he was to the three children of old. When is the old man most mortified, and the thousand ties which bind him to earth most effectually weakened or cut? It is when he is compelled to exclaim, "Miserable comforters are ye all!" Or, perhaps, it was poverty which came upon the believer. His wealth, nay, perhaps his very means of procuring daily bread, took wings and flew away, and how did that affect the soul? If the soul was what it ought to be, did not the unsearchable riches of Christ become more precious than before? Was not an all-sufficient God found to be enough? Nay, was not the tried one sometimes ashamed, and laid in the dust by the shame, that he should for one

moment have felt disconsolate and downcast, as if God were not sufficient?

There is reason to ascribe glory to God in the highest, because the history of the church, or the experience of every minister of Christ, is full of cases illustrative of the blessings which thus flow from tribulation. It is true that the cross by itself will not lead to such results. It can harden. It can drive farther from God than ever. It can prove, like the preaching of the cross, a savour of death unto death. At the most, it can wring tears from the eyes and sighs from the heart, and promote the sorrow of the world—tribulation and wo. But there is no real blessing, unless there be real holiness resulting from trial, and the man of many woes is the man of many sins, and of most thorough ungodliness, unless the end of his tears and his trials be to promote that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. But, on the other hand, there is a blessedness in tears; he is happy whom the Lord correcteth; it is *all joy* when we fall into divers troubles, if the Spirit of Jehovah come with them—and the following cases illustrate the remark.

There is one standing in the high places of the land pleading for the rights of the Lord of the Sabbath. He is beneficent and bland, and gentle and yielding to an extent which might suggest the fear that he would surrender or compromise all, or become one of those who reverse the divine maxim—first pure, then peaceable—and sacrifice principle, as thousands have done, for peace. Moreover, the time once was, when that man of gentle nature interdicted all reference, in his presence, to those truths which wrap up omnipotence in them, and which are the Holy Spirit's organ for conveying a wisdom or a strength more than human into the soul of man. But now, the mighty change which makes all things new has taken place in him. The timid has become courageous, the self-distrusting strong in the Lord, and he stands forth among the ribald and the profane to advocate the rights and the mercies

which the world's misguided Esaus blindly barter away for a mess of food. He is literally made the song of the drunkard. Lampoon—caricature—the insolence of the vulgar—the coarse assault of those who are "haters of God"—the sneer of the formal—the coldness of pretended friends—the spite of princes—the hostility of a senate which collectively is unchristian—are all arrayed against him, insomuch that none of the martyrs ever bore a heavier cross, or endured a greater fight of afflictions, than did Sir Andrew Agnew.

And, under the cross, how did he proceed? Did he decline to bear it, or did he murmur under it? Nay, but he fled to the secret place of strength, the Word of God; and at the very moment when his name was a source of merriment to a godless crowd beneath his windows, he was in the act of drinking in strength from the psalm which says, "They that sit in the gate spoke against me, and I was the song of the drunkard." The charges of Judaism, of Puritanism, and of Asceticism, which were profusely showered upon him, never ruffled his equanimity, but neither did they drive him from his purpose. He followed the Lord fully, and even from some of his bitterest revilers he at last extorted, by the might of his gentleness, a respect which was not unmingled with affection. While he was a companion in the tribulation of the people of God, he was also a partaker of the consolation which the Spirit of all grace imparts. While "enduring the scorn of the thoughtless, the ignorant, and the profane, he enjoyed, through the mercy of his God, much inward peace and consolation;" and would he not tell us now from his higher sphere, that however heavy his cross might seem, it was light compared with the exceeding weight of glory? His God was a little sanctuary to him. The servant was covered in the hollow of the Master's hand, and he endured as seeing God who is invisible.

We cannot soon forget a sight witnessed in a sphere like that in which Sir Andrew moved, calculated to shed light on such a subject as the Christian under the cross.

It was in a household where death had committed many ravages. The saddening visitations had been blessed to some, but, as far as man could judge, they had only deepened the worldliness of others; or rather, the solemn and touching appeals which had been made by God in providence did not produce the effect for which they came, and they therefore left the regardless more deeply imbedded than before,—they seemed a savour of death unto death. An attempt was made by a member of that household to deduce lessons for good from some incidents which had occurred, but instantly the parent fired at the intrusive allusion, gentle and delicately feminine as it was. So intense appeared the enmity of that carnal mind, that the outbreak could not be repressed, and so haughty, so overbearing, was the treatment, that the offending daughter was driven in tears from the presence of the father who should have rejoiced to see that her thoughts were turned Godwards. It was the incident of a few minutes, but it embodies principles which stretch in their results into eternity. It tells from what unexpected quarters the cross may come, and reminds us of the last words of another, whose parents had too successfully essayed to win her back from following the Lord to love the world, and plunge into its follies. She died an early death, and her last words to her agonized parent were, "My father! last year I would have sought the Redeemer—father, your child is . . . . ." She did not live to complete the sentence; and He who looks on the heart alone knows what the words would have been—the sentiment is, "Your child is lost for ever, and you are the cause."

We have spoken of the countlessly diversified forms in which the cross may come. Take another instance. A—— W—— had been for several years the victim of a disease which baffled all the skill of man. Alternate attacks and alleviations, but gradual decline upon the whole, had brought her very low; and to have gazed upon her, as she lay a sad prisoner for so many weary months and years, might have suggested thoughts of

gloom and deep distress, as the "lovers of pleasure more than of God" would have fled in horror from her chamber. But, far from that, the sufferer was ever meek and patient. It was manifest that she was growing in grace, and that her strength and sufficiency were found in the Lord alone. Though her troubles abounded, her consolations were as great. A weanedness from the world—a ripeness for heaven—a likemindedness with the Saviour of the lost, were more and more apparent from month to month. To flesh and blood the cross was heavy—to faith it was made light, because Omnipotence enabled her to bear it—as the lustre of earthly things was tarnished, and the glory which was to be revealed seemed brighter and more real, from month to month. And when the closing scene approached, how calmly and tranquilly did A—— W—— prepare to meet her God! She felt the coming of death; but she was not discouraged, for she had learned to look at this side of the grave as the place of shadows—the substance was all beyond it; and to the enjoyment of that substance she was passing gently forward, as if a father had been leading her. When she felt that the closing hour was near, she requested her kindred to be assembled around her bed for one prayer more, before she passed away to the home where all is praise. The prayer was offered, and then she took a calm, or even a placid farewell of all who had been dear to her, desiring them thereafter to withdraw, with the exception of a favourite sister—for she wished to die alone. All was done with the serenity of one who had indeed set her house in order, and who could say—"He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure." The way had been long, and the cross, we repeat, had been heavy; but death found her in spirit and in truth at the base of that holy mountain where there is nothing to hurt or to offend, and the rest, at least of her spirit, began even here below.

One of the most remarkable instances of carrying the cross to which any child of God ever was exposed,

is found in the case of a believer in very humble life—we refer to Elizabeth Lindsay.* Amid a complication of diseases such as rarely fall to the lot of man, even in a world where the whole creation is groaning and travailing together in pain, she passed on to her eternal home. Locked jaw and the loss of sight were at one and the same time pressing upon her, while her only nourishment was milk sucked through a straw, by an aperture from which one of her teeth had been removed to admit of its entrance. Fit succeeded fit, and one paroxysm of pain pressed upon another, till of all human sufferers she seemed among the most miserable. Deafness was added to her other ailments,—and yet, while her frame was thus the focus of disease, she was happy, serene, or even joyful. She was compassed about with songs of deliverance; she walked through the water, but God was there; through the rivers, but they did not overflow her; and through the fire, but she was not burnt, neither did the flame kindle upon her.

We might quote at large from the striking Memoir of Elizabeth Lindsay,—so simple was her faith, so unmurmuring her submission even in the hottest furnace. Her case most signally illustrates the truth that our heavenly Father "*scourges* every child whom he receives;" and a strangely chequered life was the result. All agony in body—yet all joy in soul; now tortured in every nerve and every muscle by a complication of four or five disorders, any one of which might have proved fatal—but, amid them all, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. "I have had a thorny path, but not a trial too many." "I cannot express what joy I feel; the heaviest end of the burden was borne for me by my Christian friends." "It is not *suffering* that would lead me to long for home; but I do long to be free from sin." "He is indeed my portion, and were the furnace heated seven times, his grace will be sufficient for me." "Oh, what it is to be in Christ, and to

* Memoir of Elizabeth Lindsay, by Charlotte D. Greville, a precious *Annal of the Poor.*

have Christ in us the hope of glory." "Glorify God on my account: for as my day, so hath he made my strength to be." These and similar sentiments flowed from the heart of this chastened sufferer, in a way which alike gladdened and surprised the children of God who resorted to her home as to a temple built only for praise. In letter after letter, she poured out her full soul, now in praise to that God who had laid cross after cross upon her, and then in encouragements the most cheering to all who had entered on the narrow way. It is indeed a case which eloquently tells of the sustaining power of grace, and which proclaims aloud that "happy is the man whom the Lord correcteth," when correction brings us to himself. The blossoms of the aloe are seen but once in a hundred years, and is not this an aloe in the garden of the Lord?

It can never be made too plain that the believer is under an influence altogether distinct from that which guides the ordinary children of men. It is not mere animal life—it is not mere intellectual life, which he enjoys; he rises into a higher region, and breathes a purer air. His is spiritual life, perennially fed by Him in whom the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells. We do not pass into that higher region by slow gradations, as if the natural melted imperceptibly into the spiritual. That is not a transition,—it is a translation. It is not a higher stage of what we possess at our birth, that constitutes the new birth or the new creation. The latter is altogether distinct, and *sui generis*. It is the work of the Spirit in man's soul. It is the life of which Paul spoke when he said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,"—and when the children of men are partakers of that higher life, even the agonies of the body may only minister to the nobler triumphs of the soul. The cross becomes to the believer what it was to his Lord—a source of glory, and the means of conquest.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Backslider.

"Seest thou those worlds
That roll at various distance round the throne
Of God, innumerous, and fill the calm
Of heaven with sweetest harmony, when saints
And angels sleep? As one of these, from love
Centripetal withdrawing, and from light,
And heat, and nourishment cut off, should rush
Abandoned, ...
So pride from God drew off the bad; and so
Forsaken of Him, he lets them ever try
Their single arm against the second death."

POLLOK.

The Backslider.

A shipwreck—The apostate—An example—Two questions regarding him—How was he deceived?—And how unmasked?—The backslider—Declension in religion—Its commonness—And symptoms—Cases—A minister of religion—A young believer—A poor man become rich—The progress of declension—Results—Francis Spira—The Duke of Lauderdale—Archbishop Sharp—The warning.

AFTER a shipwreck, we often see the shore strewed with the tokens of the tempest's fury, or the trophies of its resistless power:—it may be in stiff or mangled bodies, it may be in costly merchandise, the produce of many lands, or in the spars and fragments of the shattered vessel; but whatever it be, there is much to tell that the ocean is one of the grand instruments employed by Omnipotence to chastise proud man, or to show him the limits and the puniness of his power.

And the same thing takes place in the spiritual life. We not seldom see traces there of the wrecks which happen in regard to the concerns of the soul, and these tell as mournful a tale concerning its destiny as the entire demolition of some majestic vessel can tell of her's. In one case, it may be a tale of entire and thorough shipwreck, where yawning destruction is the lot of the soul. Such was the case of Julian the Apostate. He was accustomed to boast that he had read the Scriptures, had known, and had condemned them; while, if he *had* known them, he would have understood that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can

he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The proof that Julian had never known the Scriptures is his final apostasy, and that apostasy is itself an evidence of the Word which he rejected and despised. But, in another instance, it may be only some partial loss, like that which befell when the mariners who undertook to carry Jonah to Tarshish had to cast their lading into the sea. In either case, however, even in the most favourable circumstances, the results are startling; and it may tend to deepen or enlarge our views of the Christian life, if we contemplate for a little the experience of a backslider, as it is not seldom witnessed in every portion of the church of Christ.

The first aspect in which we would regard him is that which ends in entire apostasy, and the absolute ruin of the soul, as far as the eye of man can reach. We could enumerate many examples of this deplorable close of a professing Christian's career; let one suffice for all. W. E—— was a professor of no ordinary pretensions. He read and seemed to relish the writings which told most specially of the Saviour's work of redemption, and the Spirit's work in sanctifying. He sought out the highest tone of doctrine in the ministry, and withal he did not shrink from a plain exposition or a personal application of the duties which are the corelative of sound doctrine in a believer's life. He was moreover zealous as a teacher of the young in Sabbath schools. He was fertile in devices for promoting their welfare; nor did he, amid his labours of such seeming love, exhibit that offensive obtrusiveness of his religion which is sometimes apparent in such cases, as if the hypocrite would sound a trumpet before him, proclaiming his own folly, and announcing the giddy height at which he stands, but from which he is just about to fall. At the last, however, E—— made utter shipwreck of the faith. He became one of those who bring disgrace on the holy name by which they are called. Exile and death in a foreign land was the result of his unholy conduct; and he added another to those who may be counted in crowds,

who have illustrated by their conduct the cautious words of John:—"They went out from us; but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out from us, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Now, two considerations here occur. How could such a man succeed so far as to impose upon his own conscience, and persevere for years in such a course? or, how could he be so blind to the state of his own soul as to suppose that he ever was a follower of the truth? And what was the process by which he was unmasked at last?

In regard to the first question, a hundred answers might be given. The radical explanation is, that there never was a work of real conversion in the soul. All the religion which was known was hereditary, traditional, or the results of human agency and education. The Spirit of God had never quickened the conscience, or never renewed the heart. The outside of the sepulchre was whitewashed—the rottenness was still rank within. It was the mere exterior of the truth which was seen and known. It had attractions for the natural intellect—it had not a little to gratify the natural emotions; but the conscience had never been fairly confronted with it. The necessity of taking up the cross and following Christ had never been felt—there was no death to sin and self, no living unto righteousness and God; and hence the soul was ready either to sink into gross sin, or embrace the errors of Popery, or even pass over to the delusions of Islamism, as some have done, when the current of interest was sufficiently strong, or the temptations of pleasure sufficiently powerful, to sweep away the feeble barrier which a formal religion or a merely ancestral faith had reared across the path of life.

And what was it that unmasked such a professor at last? Some temptation occurred which grace could have resisted, but with which the superficial religion of

E—— was unable to cope. It came in the form of man's friendship, or man's fear. It was some bright pecuniary bribe. It was the prospect of aggrandizement, made attractive by unmortified pride. It was the heart's craving for something which spiritual religion prohibits. It was some incident which did for that soul what Ithuriel's spear did for Satan in paradise. While bent upon the fall of Eve,

> "Him thus intent, Ithuriel with his spear
> Touched lightly, for no falsehood can endure
> Touch of celestial temper, but returns
> Of force to its own likeness. Up he starts
> Discovered and surprised."

—But in whatever form the lure was presented, it was sufficiently powerful to subvert and sweep away man's feeble substitute for the religion of God's Word and Spirit, for that alone can carry us through the temptations of life. What is a God unknown and unseen to the heart which is unchanged by the Spirit? What is an eternity, which after all, it is half-hoped, may be a dream, to a soul intoxicated by some of the thousand stimulants which the god of this world applies to man's passions? They are as flax before the flame; and the man who has long made a religious profession, but in whom the natural heart is still dominant, hastens to make shipwreck of the faith, and cast in his lot among those who forget God. Delirium tremens, or some similar fatality, at once proves the extent of that soul's degradation, and perhaps hurries it into the presence of the Judge whom it never loved and utterly refused to fear. Had temptation come into collision with the grace of God in the heart, had the Spirit of all truth been there, and the armour of God been buckled on, the tempter would have been repelled, and the soul would have escaped from the dangerous assault. But there was nothing in that soul but nature; and against the swelling pride or the untamed passion of the unregenerate heart, nature, with all the force which it can muster, is feeble as the withes with which Samson was bound against his mighty strength.

Such is the case of the utter apostate. He abandons, and practically abjures, the religion of Jesus. He hastens to take revenge upon himself for former appearances, by drinking up iniquity as the ox drinks water, and he scatters firebrands, arrows, and death, at least through his own soul. Is it not as true now as of the Hebrews in the desert—"Because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you?" No "season of clear-shining" irradiates the soul, but the blackness of darkness appears to envelope it before the time.

But there is a modified form of backsliding where the ruin is not utter, nor the falling away for ever. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Such is the declaration of Jehovah regarding the backslider. He is reproved and corrected, but not utterly destroyed, and his experience is of a profoundly instructive nature. It is not an utter shipwreck; but it is one in which the soul escapes only upon a raft. Contemplate for an instant such a case.

In every soul there are periodic declensions, for no believer walks at all times in equal nearness to his God. All *might* do so. Grace is sufficient to accomplish that end, did we, in the simplicity of faith, live near enough to the fountain. But even though the spirit be willing, the flesh is weak; and under its influence many depart away from Him with whom they have resolved to walk. Their first love is forgotten. The Spirit of God is grieved—the world is loved in a measure again. Its spirit is imbibed—its smile is sought—its pleasures are pursued; and all this by some of those who profess to be following the Lord, though they dare not profess that they are following him fully.

The symptoms of this state of soul are as obvious as they are painful to the spiritual eye. The impression of divine things is obliterated and all but erazed. Worldly pursuits engross the mind again. Prayer is

first occasionally, then frequently neglected, and as the soul waxes more and more callous, that privilege is abandoned for a time. Could we trace the history of such declensions, it would be found that one of their earliest symptoms was prayer not relished, then intermitted, and at last utterly discontinued. The spiritual malady creeps over the soul, like sleep upon those who are exposed to extreme cold; and that sleep would be fatal were grace not omnipotent. The believer thus becomes sickly and pining, like one wasting away under the influence of atrophy or consumption; and the distinction between that soul and the world gradually becomes less and less, till, perhaps even in the judgment of charity, the believer is regarded as an unmasked pretender, or one who had never known the grace of God in truth. He seems to sit beside Demas, and Hymeneus, and Alexander, like them making shipwreck of the faith.

Instances of this occur on every side. There is a minister of religion charged by God over all with the tending of some portion of the flock of Christ. He addresses himself to the work with great assiduity, with prayer, and apparently simple faith. For a season all seems full of promise, and some of God's people perhaps rejoice in his light. It appears as if he would never weary in well-doing—his joy is to work for souls as his hire. But difficulties occur; faith is tried; and he who was before so zealous that he seemed a fire to burn up all that is opposed to the holy mind of God, becomes first cold, then careless, then formal and perfunctory. His work is a routine—the heart is not in it—and though grace may be there, it exists like a spark in the ocean. It is well if such an one be not left to reap the whirlwind as he has been sowing the wind.

Or some young believer has felt constrained to dedicate herself soul and body to the Saviour. When his love unto death was understood and felt, it was not possible to withhold that self-surrender. For a time all appeared full of promise—it was a living soul re-

joicing in spiritual liberty, and rejoiced over by others as a saved brand. But the cares of life began to thicken around it; the duties perhaps of a family required at length to be discharged, and then came the time of trial, of peril, and of falling away. The very things which should have warned her to live nearer to God, and walk more by faith, became the means of enticing her away, and the soul sank into that state of stupor from which nothing but intense suffering and some heavy trial could rouse it. O how many wrecks of this class can be traced by many a minister of Christ in the retrospect of only a few brief years of ministering!

Or, once again, a man in humble life has maintained a close walk with God. Where he had a home his God had an altar, and the morning and the evening sacrifice ascended thence with gladness. The dew of Hermon refreshed him, and his step never seemed so elastic as along the way which led to the house of God. But the world smiled; its bewitching influence was felt; the cornucopia of a bountiful Providence was emptied into that man's lap,—and what was the result? Gradually God was hidden by his gifts. Another proof was supplied that providence is not grace; and if "the prosperity of the fool did not destroy him," it was because God is unchanging, and not because man was steadfast in his covenant. The Scriptures show how the most signal saints have fallen. Moses was passionate and rash. Job attempted self-justification. Jonah tried to flee from God's presence. David sinned as few have ever done. Peter fell, and falsehood and imprecations were the accompaniments of his fall; and in every age, we see even the people of God ready to perpetrate the destruction of their own souls, did not restraining grace prevent. In such cases, something like a new conversion is needed to replace the fallen soul on its pedestal, or rekindle the light which man had wellnigh extinguished.

And how is the soul employed when this mimic if not real death is creeping over it inch by inch? It is pro-

phesying pleasant things to itself. It is hoping against hope, that though it may have transgressed, the transgression is venial; it may soon be atoned for—the steps can be retraced at pleasure. The fascinations of the world, like the gleaming of burnished armour in the sun, bewilder or blind the eye—and at last the victim of infatuation settles down in the conviction, that he will have peace though he walk in the sight of his own eyes and after the devices of his own heart. The form of godliness may be kept up, but God is not there; all but the deluded one himself may see that his soul is pining away; it is a weak and withering thing. It has ventured into the world's malaria, and is fast sinking there. It is dwelling in the neighbourhood of the world's deadly infection, and what marvel though disease and threatening death be the result?

As the characteristics of backsliding are twofold, so are the results. In the one case—that of entire apostasy—the soul is dead before the body dies, and "the sin unto death" receives an appalling explanation. Man's eye may not be able to detect when that is the case; but in the providence of God, examples are on record which throw a lurid light, more terrific than darkness, around the apostate's soul. Judas is not the only recorded case in which men for a time companied and seemed to sympathise with Jesus, yet after all drew back to perdition. The case of Francis Spira is solemn and terrific. For about six years he appeared to be the staunch adherent and upholder of the truth, and stirred up a section of Italy to rejoice in the light; but persecution arose, and then he was offended. He recanted what he had once adopted and upheld, and soon thereafter his remorse of soul began. Bodily disease supervened. The skill of Italy attempted a remedy, but in vain; for his case was beyond the reach of human appliances. He aimed at self-destruction by various means. Stung and galled by a quickened conscience, he wished that "some one would shorten his days." In reply to all attempts to console him, Spira exclaimed,

"My sin is greater than the mercy of Christ." "I am a reprobate like Cain or Judas." "My friends do me great wrong in not suffering me to depart to the abode of the unbelieving." In bitterness of spirit, he cried, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Assuredly despair is hell itself." "My crime is not one iota less than that of Judas." "Give me a sword," he exclaimed, with no hidden purpose; and after eight weeks of agony, he passed into the presence of the Judge, a wasted and emaciated being, without showing any token of restoration from that "horrible pit." Such was an apostate, signalized above most, yet identical in spirit with all! He denied his Saviour that he might enjoy the world's smile; and his solemn history proclaims to us the result, when conscience was awakened from its slumber, and reasserted the claims of its God.

But others are restored from their declension. Their own iniquities are made to correct them, and the anguish of soul through which they have passed has often been more than that which accompanied their conversion. We do not read that Peter's conversion was one of tears and anguish, but we know that his restoration was. Of David, we are not told how he passed from death to life; but we read what his recovery from sin cost, in words which find their way with the velocity of light to the spiritual conscience:—"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." The anguish, the bitterness of soul, through which some have thus passed, after sinking into sin, and grieving the Spirit who converted them, lays bare at once man's wondrous power of endurance, and Jehovah's determination that sin shall be put down.

There is a question of much interest which we would fain consider here. How does it happen that apostates are often the most bitter persecutors? By what process, for example, did the Duke of Lauderdale, and Archbishop Sharp—once, in man's estimation, the zeal-

ous and intrepid friends of truth—become its most bitter enemies, and the most malignant persecutors of its friends? The explanation is manifold. Once tempted to apostatize, their apostasy must be vindicated, however bloody the vindication may prove. Then, like all ignoble minds, they hated those whom they had deeply injured. At the same time they hated the truth of God, as too pure for their toleration. If they were wrong in abandoning the cause which they had once espoused, others were right in adhering to it; and hence their mode of proving themselves to be right, and avenging the wrong of others, was to vie in their atrocity, in their anxiety to shed blood, their zeal in attempting to exterminate what they disliked, and blasphemously dooming the excellent of the earth to "glorify God in the Grass-market"—that is, on the scaffold erected there. They proclaim aloud the danger of apostasy; and while their history enables us to see far into the dark depths of the human heart, it may well draw forth the prayer, "Hold thou up our goings, and so we shall be safe."

CHAPTER XXV.

Despair.

"While I was thinking .... I felt my heart sink in despair, concluding it was too late, and therefore I resolved in my mind to go on in sin; for, thought I, if the case be thus, my state is surely miserable,—miserable if I leave my sins, and but miserable if I follow them: I can but be damned, and if I must be so, I had as good be damned for many sins as be damned for few."—BUNYAN.

Despair.

The body's influence over the soul—Especially in religion—Scudder's "Christian's Daily Walk"—Despair resulting from physical causes—And from spiritual—A case—Another—Despair in its darkest forms—John Stevenson—The remedy for this evil—Looking unto Jesus—Difficulties connected with prayer—Robert Traill's definition of faith.

THE mysterious union of the soul and the body gives rise to some peculiarities in religious experience, which it is requisite to study with care.

There can be no question, that that union often leads to results which tend greatly to depress or becloud the mind of religious inquirers. When a feeble or distempered body and an acute or a scrupulous conscience meet, it not seldom happens that they so act and react, as to occasion what should be ranked under the head of bodily disease, rather than regarded in a spiritual light. By brooding over the mind's disorder, when men should be adopting active measures to counteract that of the body, the malady is aggravated, and a denser gloom gathers round the soul. The result is, that some thus "dwell in darkness like those who have long been dead." The mind is overshadowed by the body, which becomes not so much the tabernacle as the tomb of its immortal occupant. There may be truth presented to that mind, but it is not received; and the brightest manifestations which can be made appear only like the lightning playing on the black bosom of a thunder-cloud. The light finds no ingress; it is like a footprint before the flowing tide, instantly effaced. It imparts no joy. In

gloomy dejection, the despairing one continues the victim of bodily ailment, yet self-condemned, as if some peculiar atrocity of sin had obliterated hope, and left the soul a prey to the curse before the time.

The origin of this state of mind is manifold. It may be altogether physical—the result of disease and distemper; and when that is the case, it should be utterly disconnected from religion, because it brings an evil and a false report against the truth. "When these troubles are merely bodily distempers, though they be not troubles of conscience, yet they make a man incapable of the sense of peace of conscience. Whoever, therefore, would enjoy the benefit of the peace of his conscience, must do what in him lies to prevent or remove these distempers. And because they grow, for the most part, from natural causes, therefore natural as well as spiritual remedies must be used."* One of the most melancholy spectacles on which the eye can rest is a soul thus pining away under the impression that it is ruined, and the conscience seared, while the truth may be that it is only, or mainly, the body diseased.

But despair may result from spiritual causes, and very often does so. There are times when men may re-echo the words of Job, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me;" or, "Thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions; so that my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life." In such a case, man has to deal directly with his God, without any intervening screen or palliation. Conscience is then clamorous and urgent in pressing his righteous claims, in contrast with man's studied and habitual denial of them. The law of God then asserts the holiness of the Lawgiver. It carries the candle of the Lord into the dark chambers of the heart, and the things which are there revealed goad the soul to despair. At the same time, the gospel is hid or it was never known; the soul struggles in its

* Scudder's Daily Walk in Holy Security and Peace, chap. xv., sect. 2.

own strength, which is only weakness, with what embodies at once the purity and the power of the Eternal, and death would sometimes be hailed by the groping soul as a relief. Annihilation has been longed for, and proposals to soothe and tranquillize have actually been resented as an injury—so urgently did conscience press the rightful claims of that law which unthinking men describe as "the dark shadow of the Hebrew God." It is *not* a dark shadow; it is the excessive brightness, and purity, and majesty of Jehovah, which bewilder the agitated soul, now alive to his holiness, but ignorant of the gospel of his grace.

This kind of despair appears under various modifications. One who had long flaunted amid the vanities of life and the perils of a full cup, was brought into the condition glanced at, by a sufficiently strange conjuncture. On the first Sabbath after her marriage, she heard a sermon on the word, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." The coincidence did not altogether escape the notice of conscience, nay, it caused some dismay in the soul, and arrested for a brief space the downward current. But the world's cares accumulated. Its pleasures and its trials came, till at last she was appealed to in the providence of God, as she had before been by his Word. She was made a widow, and strange to say, when she next returned to the house of God, now a place of weeping for her, she was again addressed from the words, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Shall we say it was chance? or shall we rather conclude that it was God in mercy addressing the wanderer to win her back? Conscience, which is ever the soundest casuist when it is enlightened, settled the question; and that weeping widow hurried to the conclusion that she was let alone. Her very trials might have taught her the reverse; but conscience, quickened by the law, though not irradiated by the gospel, hastened to adopt the conviction that the Holy One had come as Hosea said he would, "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I,

even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him."

We have before our mind a vivid picture of a despairing man. When first summoned by his appalled friends to his chamber, a scene was presented which only those who are permitted to see into men's souls by the light of the Word of God can comprehend. He was affluent and somewhat accomplished—and as he was connected with some who moved in high places, he was enabled to indulge in tastes which are not always within the reach of those who move in his sphere. He accordingly gave free scope to his predilections. His habits were expensive, his life was gay; and though we do not know that he had ever been gross in his pursuits, there is as little reason to suppose that godliness ever received a moment's serious regard. But the hour came when all that relates to earth must terminate, and all that concerns eternity be adjusted for ever. And when —— was first visited, he was found sitting in the centre of his chamber haggard, emaciated, and gloomy, while his friends and relatives stood around in mute and helpless amazement. There was no excitement in his state of mind, but just a sullen calmness, originating, as we soon discovered, in the conviction that he was "lost for ever." Affection, entreaty, remonstrance, expostulation, God's mercy and man's sympathy, were all alike in vain. From day to day that moody mind continued rooted and grounded in the conviction that it was "lost for ever." Food was refused; no voice was heard or heeded but that of conscience, echoing up from the dark depths of the past, and telling the soul that it was undone, till the horrors of that dying man's chamber were such as only Christian affection could brave. Despair there ruled beyond the reach of human appliances, —all were powerless as the monarch's order to the flowing ocean; and as those who loved that man with Christian affection turned away from his calm and settled agony, or could not brave his case of horror, it seemed as if the first drop from the vial of wrath had already

been poured out. He died in that condition,—hopeless, lightless, and, as far as man could judge, unvisited by any melting under the power of that grace which came by Jesus Christ. Surely "the name of this star is wormwood,"—the thought of that wo is like nitre on a fresh wound.

Men who are not acquainted with the strong struggles of the soul, when it discovers what sin is on the one hand, and what God is on the other, without also discovering the Mediator between God and man, are baffled in attempting to account for such things. At one period they were ascribed to sorcery; by many they are imputed to madness; by not a few they are supposed to be the result of Satanic power; and beyond all controversy, Satan is a party in producing such wo. He first tempts the ungodly to presume, and then he prompts them to despair. But in man's own ungodly life, in his quickened conscience, and the law of God read in the lurid light of Sinai (the only light which the natural conscience can see), we find enough to explain the despair which has gathered so portentously around the closing scenes of many a sinner's life. May we not suppose that there is One mightier than Satan dealing with such souls? The enemy of man, no doubt, can discharge his fiery darts. He can teach the sinner to dare Omnipotence, and then man sinks into the second death. He can tempt, all too successfully, not merely to question God's mercy, but to deny his very being; and that power of the tempter may explain much that is seen in the life and death of the despairing; but it is the solemn words, "Let him alone," which seals the sinner's portion; and were these not uttered by the just Judge of the skies, Satan would be feeble before the grace of God. It is the Spirit quenched which explains the whole, and towards that terrific consummation every conscience which resists the Spirit's movements may every moment be advancing.

This case, and others of the same class, are not to be confounded with one which is somewhat similar in ap-

pearance, though essentially different in nature. To illustrate this, we point at once to the instance of a noted believer in humble life, John Stevenson of Dailly.* Amid the strange vicissitudes of his experience, he was sometimes in such a state of mind as may recall the paroxysms or the gloom of the despairing. He tells us that a cloud arose, small at first, like that to which Elijah pointed, but gradually overspreading the heavens so as to hide the Sun of Righteousness from his view. Darkness became God's pavilion. He was a God who hid himself, and the prayers of the mourner appeared to be shut out. For more than two years did that state of soul continue; it was with him as with Job, "the arrows of the Almighty drank up the sufferer's spirit," and he reached the conclusion at last that "God had forgotten to be gracious." But amid these sad desolations of the soul, there was something essentially distinct from the fixed despair of ——. Buffeted as this mourner was by Satan, and tempted above measure, he was ever struggling to resist the tempter, and though "he went from day to day broken and much borne down, with the weak body scarcely able to subsist any longer," there was still an under-current of hope in the heart, and in due time the soul was brought up from the pit. Similar as its condition might be to that of one who actually despaired, and though there was much unbelief mixed up with that prolonged darkness and distress, still in the main the heart clung to the Hand which smote it, saying, like Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It was a trial of faith protracted and heavy, but when that troubled man had learned to pray in all simplicity, and to expect while he prayed, "O send forth thy light and thy truth," the Sun shone out after the rain, and the heart was again made glad. This man's case finds its parallel in the flower which droops and dwindles, when deprived for a time of the

* See his "Rare Soul-Strengthening and Comforting Cordial for Old and Young Christians," reprinted in the Select Biographies of the Wodrow Society, vol. ii.

rain and the dew. The case of ——— is the oak shivered by a power which man cannot resist, and then—

"Black from the bolt above, poor stricken man
Stands a sad shatter'd trunk."

But what is the remedy for this sad condition of the soul?* It is the very same as that which God has revealed for the restoration to the sinful children of men. Even ———, amid his rooted and immovable despair, was self-condemned before he was cut off by God. Had even he fled to the hope set before us in the gospel, he would have found peace restored to his bewildered spirit. But the evil heart of unbelief had obtained, and was allowed to keep, undivided possession of the fallen one; and departing from the living God, doubting his love or denying his mercy, is ever the result of listening to that heart. But in such a case as that of Stevenson, which those who are familiar with such exercises of the soul may witness from day to day, the remedy is plain, simple, and specific. Does Satan discharge his fiery darts? Quench them on the shield of faith. Does he assail with charges regarding the presumption involved in *such* a sinner hoping for pardon? Remember that God says, "The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin." Does the tempter suggest that the very hardness of our heart is a reason for despair? The answer is, It is neither the hardness nor the tenderness of man's heart which is the rule in such a case, but the Word of the living God. Is it strongly borne in upon the mind that the unpardonable sin has been committed? Reason thus upon the subject—Do I lament the sin? Is it in any degree my grief, my torment, my burden? Then rest assured that it has not been committed. Does indwelling sin haunt, perplex, and harass?—and is it the feeling of the soul that it must one day perish? It was the same with Paul; and the process which brought deliverance to him will bring it also to us—"I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord." Whatever points to the Redeemer,

* One of the best analyses of despair, in connection with religion, may be found in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 724, *et seq.* Edit. 1845.

and guides the sinner to him for mercy to pardon, will be regarded, amid the joys of eternity, as blessings in disguise. Even Satan's temptations will be overruled and made subservient to high purposes, if we press the nearer on their account to Him who gives the victory over every spiritual antagonist. One who was so far led astray as to doubt the very being of God, was restored by perceiving his perfections "displayed in every pile of grass, and every flower of the field," "which happy deliverance from the fearful pit and the miry clay" "filled his soul with unspeakable joy, even in the works of nature." How much more in the work of grace, in the person, the offices, and the finished work of Him who is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely! "I have a consciousness," said the Rev. Charles Simeon, "that I ought to lie at the foot of the cross, and I have a consciousness that I do so. I have a consciousness that I perform no duty aright; but I have a consciousness that God hears my sighs, and treasures up my tears; and taking this consciousness in connection with God's promises, I rejoice in hope of the glory of God." That is the divine method, whether for arriving at hope, or regaining it when lost.

But no doubt many of these cases are best explained by the supposition, that what perhaps began in spiritual concern has occasioned or degenerated into bodily disease. Some in deep earnestness of soul have recorded the substance of communings between them and him who was a liar from the beginning.* "The enemy suggested," said one,† "that all my provocations and heart-plagues were written on my forehead, and that all the people were gazing at them; he so far prevailed as to make me sit down in haste and hide my face." Now, without at all questioning the machinations or the power of the accuser of the brethren against the believing soul, we may conclude that the spirit which leads into such exercises is something else than a spirit of simple faith.

* See Stevenson's Life in Select Biog. of Wod. Soc., vol. ii., p. 423.
† Ibid., p. 430.

They do not originate in aught that religion would cherish. The scriptural rule in such a case is to resist Satan, and he will flee from us, instead of parleying with the tempter, whether fancy suggests that he is communing with us in articulate language, or scaring us by inarticulate and inhuman sounds.

That phase of the great spiritual malady which we have now been considering, is sometimes aggravated by the injudicious counsels of unwise friends. In regard to prayer, for example, those who are tempted to despair often design to abandon that exercise. Their heart is so unfeeling—their lips so stammering—nay, their language so utterly refuses to flow forth, that they often find additional food for despair in the very privilege which might gladden and refresh them. And in these circumstances, some would even sanction the abandoning of prayer, while others suggest that God may be trying the patience of the afflicted one, in order to reward it with larger measures of grace. But each of these is dangerous. To restrain prayer is to sin. To suppose that God will visit us in mercy for aught that we can suffer, may be to supersede the Saviour; and the simple directory in all such cases is, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Look unto him; come unto him; and seeing light in his light, all the darkness of despair will be dissipated—the soul will be irradiated in God's good time, by Him who enlighteneth every man. If the soul cannot come to him, it can surely act on the counsel of the judicious Traill, who says, "When the wearied traveller is unable to proceed farther, he can yet lie down when he is bidden—and that is faith." Let the soul, then, lie down; let it be still and know that God is God, and he will bring forth its righteousness like the noonday.

It were well were despair to take possession of some souls—they might thereby be driven to the Hope of Israel; while, as they are, they are leaning upon broken reeds, or building refuges of lies. The habitual drunkard has been known to glide onward to the grave,

soothed and made presumptuous by the remembrance of former anxieties regarding his soul; in other words, these former anxieties were his Saviour from present pollution and guilt! Obstinate sinners have been known to cling to the supposition that they were once converted, and, lulled by that supposition, have passed on without anxiety along a path of open sin to judgment. "One of the profanest men I ever heard speak," writes Dr Archibald Alexander of Princeton, "and one of the most outrageous drunkards, when asked on his death-bed, to which he was brought by intemperance, respecting his prospects beyond the grave, said, that when a very young man he had been among the Methodists, and thought he was converted; and though he had lived in the most open and daring wickedness for more than twenty years since that time, yet he seemed to depend on those early exercises." Now, were it not well for such minds to be goaded to despair, rather than to be thus rocked asleep by presumption? Were not the throes and wormwood of Spira's lot preferable to "the ease in Zion," "the peace, peace," "the strong delusions to believe a lie," of such misguided souls? We have heard a dying one, oppressed with sickness, which no remedy could remove or alleviate, exclaim, "O for pain! O for pain!" It was felt that aching agony would have been a relief from the depressing load which weighed upon the heart, and eventually laid the body in the grave; and a parallel to that case may be found in the soul which has sunk into the stupor of sin.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Darkness—Mental Aberration.

"Behold
His rooted gaze upon the chains he wears,
And on the channels they have wrought upon him;
Then look around upon his dungeon walls,
And view yon scanty mat on which his frame
He flings, and rushes from his thoughts to sleep.
Sleep!
I'll sleep no more until I sleep for ever:
* * * *
I'll sleep no more! I'll *think* until I die."

WOLFE.

Darkness—Mental Aberration.

Mania—Its aspects and frequency in society—Explanations—Cases in illustration—The soothing power of Truth—The reason—The remedy applied—And the result produced

"PAUL, thou art beside thyself!" was the exclamation of Portius Festus, when he heard the apostle earnestly pleading for the truth of God. High fervour would have been tolerated in any cause but that which the man of God was urging. Ardour on that topic was frowned on by men; and the imputation of mysticism or madness was cast upon him who made Felix tremble by his high-toned pleading for righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; and won trophies to the truth, by his sanctified fervour, even among the Areopagitæ.

Yet it is indisputable that some phases of mania are connected in the minds of many with a kind of religion; and it may help to cheer or to guide some of those who are visited by that sore calamity, if we attempt to unfold some of its symptoms, its causes, and its antidote.

Few are aware how diversified are the aspects in which mental disorder appears among men. There is mania or fury, and melancholia or gloomy dejection. There is monomania, where some one topic is found invariably to unhinge the mind; and that, again, is subdivided into monomania of suspicion, or pride, or superstition. Then there is demonomania, when the diseased deem themselves possessed; and erotomania, mad, pas-

sionate, and destructive. There is amentia, or literal mindlessness; there are dementia, delirium-tremens, and delirium-ferox;—but we need not prolong the catalogue. If these subdivisions be not the result of mere professional theorizing, it must be rare indeed to escape from every form or degree of mental aberration.

But it is to mania in connection with religion that we are now mainly to refer. That such a connection is alleged to exist, is certain; and in modern times the subject has attracted no little attention. Materialists have tried to find in it a proof of their assertion, that man's whole nature is homogeneous—all gross and earthly, all equally subject to disease from the same causes, and under the same conditions. Others have used it as a sophism against earnest religion, to continue the spiritual torpor of men; while others still have investigated the phenomena of mental aberration in connection with religion, with a view to discover a remedy for the sad visitation.

Now, it is scarcely necessary to observe, that whatever takes hold of the mind, when feeling is roused and deeply stirred, reigns for the time supreme, with a sway that is unchallengeable, or at least is resistless. It may be some opinion the most abnormal, or some delusion the most baseless; it may be some veriest trifle, or some mighty truth; but whatever it be, for the time it is paramount, and covers the whole soul with its influence, whether it be to excite it to violent mirth, or sink it into gloomy and cheerless dejection, or stimulate it to a frenzy which must be violently restrained. Now, let it be supposed, that, while the mind is in that sensitive condition, religion, the only topic which should be engrossing to every human being, is presented to the soul, or earnestly pressed on its attention. That is, let an active conscience and an excited nervous system combine their influence and urge the mind forward in the same direction;—need we wonder though agitation should lead to intense anxiety; and intense anxiety, when misdirected, even to despair; and despair to ex-

citement, or to melancholy, according to the temperament of the sufferer? What marvel though the question—"What must I do to be saved?" or, "How shall man be just before his God?" which it has baffled minds the most sane and gifted to solve, should stir and agitate the inmost depths of an already excited but not enlightened spirit? In a metropolitan asylum, about five in eighty-four have been found to be excited on subjects connected with religion; and he who knows the thorough ascendency which truth should possess, in contrast with the limited power which it is permitted to wield over man, will rather wonder that there are so few, than that there are so many, thus stimulated by the grand concerns of eternity, even till reason totters on its throne.

Yet let it be written on the mind, as with a pen of iron upon a rock, that it really was not the religion of Christ which excited or unhinged those minds;—such patients only seized upon the overmastering topic, or it took hold of them, after their minds were excited by other and most probably by physical causes, so that the root and origin of the disease must be sought elsewhere than in religion. We have had occasion to visit a maniac who resolutely declared that her rank and title were that of a certain noble lady, and who would not be convinced of her delusion. Now, who would believe that that delusion had unhinged her mind? It was an effect, and not a cause—the result, and not the origin of mental disease. We have known another who was rooted and grounded in the conviction that he was George III., the reigning monarch of his youth. When he became lunatic, that aberration engrossed his whole mind, and he could not be satisfied except by the treatment and the titles which he believed to be due to royalty. And again we ask, who would argue that that man became insane because of his loyalty to George III.? That delusion fastenod on the mind after it had been disturbed by other causes, probably physical in their nature; and such a case entirely dissolves the con-

nection alleged to exist between earnest religion and mania. A passion for teaching has continued to rule in the minds of teachers, or a passion for diplomacy in the minds of statesmen, after they were mentally mutilated by derangement; and the same may happen in any sphere. In many such cases, the remedy must be sought in applications to the body, and not the soul. It is not "ministering to a mind diseased," so much as restoring the body to its normal condition, that may be expected to be blessed to impart serenity again to the soul.

But another proof of the baselessness of the world's charge against earnest religion, as if it tended to excite to madness, is found in the fact that religion enters largely into the treatment of the convalescent in the hands of the most skilful and judicious of their friends. Hope to the desponding, and consolation to the distressed, are thereby ministered. The victim of morbid fear or irritating superstition has his sorrows soothed by such appliances as only religion can impart; and in more than one retreat for the afflicted we have witnessed its hallowing effects. The religion of Him who is love visibly soothes and gently calms the body through the mind, as by other means the mind may be relieved through the body. It is convenient for some to plead this danger as an excuse for their own indifference; but were the question calmly considered, it would be found as the result both of reason and experience, that the religion of the Son of God is Heaven's own prescription for peace to the children of men. Were that religion really received, men might peacefully live and hopefully die—like the little brook,

> "Happily, joyously singing its way
> Through flowers and pebbles, the livelong day."

But further: there are unquestionably cases in which mental aberration may be traced to religion in some form as its exciting cause. When it takes a hold upon the conscience, and carries the candle of the Lord into the dark chambers of the heart, to show all that is offensive there, men *are* sometimes harassed and rendered sleepless,

till reason threatens to abandon the control of the mind. But how is this state of mind produced? Not by the religion of Jesus; but because his religion is not understood. It is some perversion of the doctrine of divine decrees. It is the heart-searching power of the law. It is communion with God in his wrath, not in his love. It is the unsubdued pride of the heart refusing to submit to God—it is some of these, or similar aspects of truth, which goad and stimulate the mind. Instead of having peace disturbed by religion, it is disturbed by the want of religion, or by the perversion or rejection of it. The religion of God, which, in the Irish tongue, is beautifully called "The Story of Peace," is designed to diffuse serenity through every soul which welcomes it; and wherever it is welcomed, the peaceable fruits are gathered. It is a divine prescription for spiritual health; and there is neither a truer nor more beautiful verse even in David's Psalms, than that which tells that

> "In dwellings of the righteous
> Is heard the melody
> Of joy and health; the Lord's right hand
> Doth ever valiantly."

The strongest of existing powers—that of religion—may discompose and distress, *when it is perverted*. But let it work as the only wise God designed; let its soothing and directing power be felt; in general terms, let the mind of man be ruled by the mind of God—and then, instead of exciting, it will give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning. Surely a Comforter who is divine may well assure us of the abundance of peace.

Nor is there any mystery in this. Can the offer of salvation ever goad or irritate unless man be determined to reject it? Can the entreaty to return to God and live for ever, stimulate so as to pain any but those who will not return? Can the presentation of a full, free, and immediate pardon ever madden man, or at all unhinge his powers, unless he deem it an insult to be offered a pardon at all? Can the assurance that the Son of God loved us, and gave himself for us, ever chafe and perplex, unless we dislike and discard him? Can the proclam-

ation of peace on earth and goodwill to the children of men, so lacerate our feelings as to make reason reel, unless peace be the same as tumult and disorder? The very proposal of these questions prompts an instinctive reply; and these are the very proposals of the Saviour's religion. There is, no doubt, an alternative connected with all these: wo, tribulation, death; and man may choose that for his portion—but then, it is man's choice, not God's religion, which agonizes the soul. Some may prefer Sinai to mount Zion. Some may linger round the law, like the insect round the flame, instead of fleeing to the gospel with its righteousness and rest. They may insulate portions of truth, and deal with these as if they were the whole. They may thus distort or dislocate the different parts of religion, and present it to man so as to distemper his mind. But let the truth of God be presented in simplicity; let the message of mercy be proclaimed in love, and heard with the heart; then religion will become a true emanation from the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the only wise God; it will prove a rock on which the soul may rest in the enjoyment of that gladness which is provided for the upright in heart. "God keepeth that man in perfect peace whose mind is staid on him;" let the mind, then, be thus staid, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep the heart and mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But does it rest on some created thing? It is seeking repose upon the sea wave, and who will wonder though it should sink into sorrow?

And this suggests the cure for such painful aberrations as we have now contemplated. It may, indeed, be questioned whether they should be enrolled in the catalogue of religious experience, or mentioned in connection with it at all. But as many earnest spirits have felt the power of the truth so keenly as to hover for a time on the margin between hope and despair, it is well to point attention to the antidote which God has provided. That antidote, we repeat, is the gospel. Not

a fragment of the truth, but the whole. Not a distortion of God's message to man, but the message itself, in all the symmetry of its parts, and all the beauty of its moral adaptations. Not emotion—not feeling—not the indulgence of fancy—not the dreams of the mystic—not the delusions of the self-righteous; but the truth as it is in Jesus—the offer received—the invitation complied with—the command, "Come," obeyed—the promise believed—the Surety rejoiced in. These are our guides as followers of the Lamb. Be these guides consulted, and his own peace will keep our heart and mind. The very God of peace will then soothe by sanctifying, he will tranquillize by pardoning; and then it will be seen, though many may refuse to recognise it, that the religion of Jesus cannot, unless it be perverted, become the cause of tumult; the religion of love cannot, until it be perverted, occasion enmity; the religion of mercy, unless it be corrupted, cannot oppress either the mind or the body; the religion of holiness, unless it be utterly misunderstood, can lead to nothing but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

* The best work which we have seen on the subject here glanced at, is Essays on Partial Derangement of the Mind in supposed connection with Religion, by Dr John Cheyne of Dublin. He says, "We firmly believe that the gospel received simply, never, since it was first preached, produced a single case of insanity; the admission that it has such a tendency ought never to have been made to the enemies of the Cross. We have granted that fanaticism and superstition have caused insanity, as well they may; nay, derangement of the mind may often have been caused by the terrors of the law; but by the gospel, by a knowledge of and trust in Jesus—NEVER."

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Morbid Religionist.

"The friend of my heart, the person with whom I had formerly taken sweet counsel, no longer useful to me as a minister, no longer pleasant to me as a Christian, was a spectacle that must necessarily add the bitterness of mortification to the sadness of despair. I now see a long winter before me, and am to get through it as I can. I know the ground before I tread upon it. It is hollow; it is agitated; it suffers shocks in every direction; it is like the soil of Calabria—all whirlpool and agitation."—COWPER, *to Rev. John Newton.*

The Morbid Religionist.

A description—An example—William Cowper—Other examples—The origin of the morbid in religion—The cure.

THE sun in the firmament is often eclipsed, but all the while his own light is as intensely brilliant as if darkness and shadow were things unknown. Our atmosphere is often loaded with vapour and clouds, amid which tempests rage; but high above the region of elemental war, there is one of perennial and unruffled serenity. No cloud ascends thither—no vapour obscures; all is as tranquil as the unbroken stillness of the "dewy eve," and there is an analogy to this in the history of the soul. It also may exist in a region where all is halcyon and serene; for God undertakes to keep that man in perfect peace whose mind is staid on him—the very peace of God then keeps the heart and mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But, far different from that most blissful state, there are other conditions in which the soul is often found turbid or tempest-tost; and we are now to advert to one of these conditions, which often brings perplexity and sore distress in its train.

There are some religionists, then, who have settled down into a condition in which they can cherish no hope, and do not appear to expect ever to cherish any. They systematically put away all that would foster it, and seem to find delight in a gloom which keeps them perpetually living on the verge of despair. Offer them

consolation—it may be for others, but not for them. Preach the gospel of the grace of God—it may be good news to others, it brings none to them. Tell of the Man of sorrows, who is able and willing to succour us in trial; even that blessed Messenger brings no repose to the soul which not merely does not hope, but refuses or seems afraid to do so; and of all the cases of spiritual distress to which those who watch for souls are called to attend, this is perhaps the most affecting; it most clearly exhibits the power of unbelief on the one hand, and the insufficiency of man to remove it on the other. The "agony of anxious helplessness," in which such earnest spirits often exist, shows us that only Jehovah can unscale the spiritual vision of man.

We had long to guide and attempt to enlighten such a soul. The glorious gospel of the grace of God was no gospel to it. With a perverse ingenuity, as if something superhuman were prompting it, every suggestion was turned away, and every means of solace discarded. The Psalms of David could not be sung in praise to God, because they embodied hopes and aspirations which that soul could not or would not cherish. Again and again the mind was on the verge of madness, yet neither threat nor promise, neither offer nor call, neither tender remonstrance nor stern rebuke, could at all affect the heart. It sank for a time into the callousness of spiritual death; and had it not been for the complaints which were uttered, the tears which were sometimes shed, or the jealousy for the glory of God which sometimes appeared, that soul might have been ranked among those who count God's service a weariness, and have utterly cast off his fear. There was no peace, no joy, no hope—

> "One feeling only couldst thou trace,
> The sullen calmness of despair."

It is well known that William Cowper was long the victim of such a state of mind. For years he laboured under the influence of morbid feeling; and, though his hallucination referred mainly to one particular point, it was enough to warp all his powers, to embitter no small

portion of his life, and divert him to studies, the results of which few now read—we mean, his translation of Homer's poems—away from those walks which none ever trod more gracefully, or from those purely evangelical topics which none ever more clearly understood, or more exquisitely illustrated, than the poet Cowper. His hallucination lay in this:—He supposed that he had received from the Almighty at a certain time a command to kill himself. His sensitive mind was then excited to insanity; yet he concluded that, because he had broken that command, he had forfeited heaven, and so tenacious was the grasp of that delusion, that no human power could unloose it, At that very period, indeed, he took a lively interest in all that related to the interests of pure and undefiled religion. His friends, John Newton and Thomas Scott, frequently corresponded with him regarding some of the deep things of God; yet while counselling these friends with very perfect wisdom, so strongly was the delusion lodged in Cowper's mind, that he habitually abstained for many years from public worship, because he deemed that privilege judicially denied to him. It was the morbid action of a mind otherwise exquisitely adjusted. It was the Word of God practically denied—at least it was something added to revelation, that guided the mind of Cowper; and even though we leave the notion of disease wholly out of view, we find enough in this to explain all his aberration—his long dreary night of spiritual sleep—the entire cessation, as far as man knows, of communion between that soul and its God.

To these cases others might be added. Those who have read the letters of Dr John Love, are familiar with one who was for many years in a state of similar darkness, not so much on account of any special aberration, as because her whole mind was so overcast and overshadowed, that not a ray of light from Him who enlightens every man shot into the gloom. From studying her uncheered case, that master in Israel saw more and more of the depths of Satan's wiles—more and more of the

tender mercy of Him who will not break the bruised reed—and more and more of the need of grace to illumine and guide the soul onward in the way to glory. Forsaken of God, or when we forsake him, what are we? —clouds without rain; wells without water; trees without root, whose fruit withereth.

But how are we to explain these strange eclipses of the soul—and how may we be delivered from them?

As to their origin and cause, we observe they may in some cases be ascribed to the physical constitution of the afflicted. We know that this is such an explanation as would alarm the piety of some, while it would gratify the enmity of others, against vital religion—the religion which stirs the soul, and takes possession of the whole man. But it is true, notwithstanding, that there are cases in which that morbid action of the mind, which invests the brightest and most blessed truth with gloom, may be traced to the physical temperament or bodily condition of the affected. As we have already seen, it is then not ministering to a mind diseased, so much as to a distempered body, that is required, and such a case is not to be mentioned under the head of religious experience at all.

But there are cases of a purely spiritual nature, where the morbid and self-consuming action of the mind appears. Conscience has been deeply stirred. The law of God has done its work, and by its terrors it has taught the sinner to know what it would be to fall into the hands of the living God. In such a case, it frequently happens that the soul, like the weeping Rachel, refuses to be comforted; and why? Because a form of unbelief sways the mind. The law of God is believed —conscience insists on that; but the gospel is not welcomed—fear prevents that. The Saviour is not fled to —the Rock, whose work is perfect, is not the soul's refuge; and, on that account, it is uncomforted—it is wretched—it is ill beyond the reach of mortal cure. But let the simple gospel be believed—let the soul look, when the Saviour says, "Look"—let the soul come,

when he says, "Come;" and, we repeat it again and again, it will live and rejoice in the abundance of peace. The gospel was designed to restore happiness to man; and it needs no argument to prove that the gospel is not received when happiness is not restored.

Or another explanation of this morbid action of the mind is found in the tendency of many to look to the Spirit's work in them, and seek their peace, and rest, and hope in that—rather than to Christ's finished work for us, and find all their salvation and all their desire in that. They could be happy did they find their faith as firm, and their hope as bright, and their love as constraining, as they think it ought to be; in other words, they could rest upon their graces, and be happy in them. But happiness in the Prince of Peace they cannot enjoy; and as it is God's design that they should enjoy it only there, they are disquieted and vexed in soul. To live upon experience, and not by faith—to put even the Spirit of God in the place of the Son—is to dislocate the symmetry of the gospel's parts, and leave the soul to be tost at the mercy of its own fitful vicissitudes.

The Saviour foresaw this state of things. He knew that men would be ever looking to the acts of their own mind rather than to his finished work, and was therefore careful to turn men's attention incessantly to himself. Indeed, this is the grand and beautiful peculiarity of the Saviour's ministry. His constant burden was, "Look unto me," "Come unto me," "I am the way, I am the door, I am the true vine, I am the bread of life;" and were the simple principle on which these lessons proceed duly acted on, all gloom and despondency would vanish away—men would cease to brood in refined misery over imaginary evils. They would no longer bring an evil report against the truth, as if its function were to embroil rather than emancipate the soul. They would no longer complain of their insensibility did they put their hearts into the Saviour's hands, and place their whole souls at his disposal. His influ-

ence, like the return of spring, setting nature free from the bonds of winter, would disenthrall the soul till men fully understood the words of one who said, "It is not religion that renders me sad, or that has ever rendered another sad. It is the want of religion which I mourn."

Or another explanation of the painful feelings which are often connected with that state of mind to which we refer, is found in the supposition entertained by some, that the experience of all should be alike. They read of the deep compunction, the self-loathing, and abhorrence of some—they hear of their anguish of soul, and how they could almost call on the mountains before the time to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the Lamb. And, almost envying that anguish, some brood over their sinfulness, and desire to be similarly humbled—if they are not so, they are unhappy, and refuse to be comforted. Now, reasoning is not needed here. The Scriptures neither say, Look to the sorrow, nor, Look to the joy of others; they say, Behold the Lamb of God. Away to him, and he will lay you low—low, not by the terrors of the law, which may be felt, while yet you may perish in your native pride, but by the grace of the gospel, which so humbles as to exalt us in due season. To delay thus to recur to the Redeemer, is to deceive the soul by a profound delusion. It is to forget the free offer of salvation, to seek preparation to come instead of coming as a sinner, and thus to envelope the soul in the folds of a mock humility—a genuine, though a disguised, self-righteousness. It is the want or the weakness of faith which occasions and perpetuates the anguish of the soul. Let faith be direct, simple, relying—and when Christ is thus honoured, the soul will be free.

We might advert to other causes of that melancholy which haunts and harasses many at different stages of the divine life. It is both a producent and a symptom of that spiritual malady to suppose, that we have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, and under the shock which that conviction sometimes occasions, the reason

reels, and the soul not seldom despairs. The offered mercy of God is put away; it is in effect rejected on account of a sin which the sinner cannot be certain he has committed. All the simple declarations, all the tender expostulations, all the promises of God, scattered as they are in the Word like stars in the midnight sky, are discarded under the imaginary guilt of a sin, regarding which the church of Christ is perhaps more divided than any other that could be named.* Or we might advert to men's misrepresentations of the doctrine of election, as another cause of this morbid and melancholy state of soul. Forgetting that election is not our rule, but Jehovah's, many act as if the divine decrees, with all their secretness, excluded them from hope, or, as in the case of Cowper's monomania, doomed them to despair. But surely the soul is willingly misled when it permits the secret things which "belong to the Lord our God," to hide or overlay all that is generous in the gospel. "I have tried, but in vain," is the cry; "the decrees block up the way." In other words, though the heart should recoil from the thought, the guilt of my perishing is God's!

But we do not prosecute this matter farther. A blind beggar once sat by the wayside. One who had power to restore his sight passed by, and what did the blind man do? Was he busied in conjuring up obstructions between himself and the divine Physician? Was he questioning whether he would heal him? Was he even brooding in feverish perturbation over his privation? Nay, he was exclaiming, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." And were we as wise in regard to the soul, the visible church would see fewer of its members sitting in sackcloth and the dust, not merely because of sin, but because they suppose that God has forgotten to be gracious, and that his promises have failed for evermore.

* No less than thirty-two different opinions regarding the sin against the Holy Ghost have been counted - showing the difficulty of deciding what it is. Is it not strange that any should decline God's sure mercy in a case so contingent?

And, O how strange that the holy God should out of such disfigured materials prepare living stones for the spiritual temple! Surely it magnifies his grace, and lights us deep into his wisdom to know, that by the subduing power of his Spirit he has made even some such souls as have been here described the monuments of his mercy. Some of the palaces of modern Rome are constructed from the ruins of the Colosseum. That stupendous pile, which resembles a work of omnipotence rather than of puny man, served for ages as a quarry for the city. Its marbles and decorations furnished ornaments in store for palace after palace; and out of a still grander ruin, the wise Master-builder is constructing the temples of the Holy Ghost. And amid all that is marvellous in that mercy, nothing can surprise us more than the fact, that God has made chosen vessels of many of those who, in self-consuming doubt of him, long limited his truth, or refused to be comforted by his exceeding great and precious promises.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Visionary—Popish Ecstatics.

"Man on the dubious waves of error toss'd,
His ship half foundered, and his compass lost,
Sees, far as human optics may command,
A sleeping fog, and fancies it dry land;
Spreads all his canvas, every sinew plies,
Pants for it, aims at it, enters it, and—dies!
Then farewell all self-satisfying schemes,
His well-built systems, philosophic dreams;
Deceitful views of future bliss, farewell!
He reads his sentence at the flames of hell."

COWPER.

The Visionary—Popish Ecstatics.

Examples—M. C——y—Bunyan's case—E. L——y—Popish conversions—Fanaticism—St. Francis of Assisi—*Pinnacle-men*—The Test.

There is a class of professing followers of Christ of whom the title *Visionary* is accurately descriptive. We have known some of this class, whose religion was based on sights supposed to have been seen, or on dreams which had been dreamed, and which led to effects alleged to constitute real Christian experience. They lived in a kind of artificial world; and instead of being engrossed with the weightier matters of the Word, their religious life, which began in a dream, was often perpetuated by delusion.

We knew an aged professor of this character. With feeble step, M. C—— was tottering onward to the grave, without any profound feeling as to what awaited her beyond it. She looked backward rather than forward, and was engrossed by what she had once dreamed, more than by a present Saviour, or the realities of the coming eternity. The mode of reconciliation was not dwelt on; it was the dream! The love of Christ did not fill and satisfy the soul—the fair object beheld in the vision seemed to have come in his place. It was not the sinfulness of sin which humbled, nor was it the blessedness of pardon which elated. It was ever the object presented to the soul in sleep that formed the rallying-point and centre of the mind. We are not prepared to say, that the grace of God had not visited that soul at

author. "Being doubtful," he says, "in my chamber, one fine day in the summer, my casement being open towards the south, the sun shining clear, and no wind stirring, I took my book *De Veritate* in my hands, and, kneeling on my knees, devoutly said these words: 'O thou Eternal God! author of this light which now shines upon me, and giver of all inward illuminations, I do beseech thee, of thine infinite goodness, to pardon a greater request than a sinner ought to make. I am not satisfied enough, whether I shall publish this book. If it be for thy glory, give me, I beseech thee, some token from heaven; if not, I shall suppress it.' I had no sooner spoken these words," the deist and denier of revelation continues, "but a loud, though yet gentle, noise came forth from the heavens (for it was like nothing on earth), which did so cheer and comfort me, that I took my petition as granted, and that I had the sign I demanded; whereupon also I resolved to print my book. This, how strange soever it may seem, I protest before the Eternal God is true. Neither am I any way superstitiously deceived herein, since I did not only clearly hear the noise; but in the serenest sky that ever I saw, being without a cloud, did to my thinking see the place from whence it came." Now, this is the very fanaticism of infidelity; and the stigmata of St Francis d'Assisi, or the vision of Ignatius Loyola, had not their origin in aught more grossly superstitious—more unworthy of the confidence of reason. To expect that men were to concede to the asseverations of such a man the confidence which he withheld from the truth of the Eternal, is one of the plainest illustrations which the records of infidelity supply of the text which tells of those who are "given up to strong delusions to believe a lie."

Another case will farther illustrate this peculiarity. It is that of one who seemed a very zealot for the purest truth. No ministry was sufficiently powerful to meet her ideas of what the Christian ministry should be. Like the men who crowded around John the Baptist,

she hurried from place to place, professedly in quest of a higher and a higher form of doctrine; but after idolizing for a time some of those who were supposed to proclaim the purest tenets, she ended by passing over to Popery, and became an active partisan in propagating the errors which subvert the Word of God—which put the fictions of man in the place of the truth of Jehovah, and leave the soul to gather grapes from thorns, or to feed on a stone instead of bread. Her case, in brief, enables us clearly to understand why so many in our day are relapsing into the errors of the Papacy. Never established upon the rock of truth by a sound conversion—seeking variety to regale, rather than grace to sanctify—ignorant of the Holy Spirit's transforming power—enamoured of the sensuous, and substituting that for the spiritual—pleased because feelings are excited, without considering how, or to what end, and having no sympathy with simple, scriptural truth, such minds only *seem* to abandon the gospel, for they never held it. When they make the transition to Romanism, they only exchange one form of delusion for another. They held a mere hereditary creed before—they hold a false or unscriptural one now; and neither of these can ever guide the soul in the path of pleasantness and peace.

The same thing will explain the ecstasies and the fervour of many Romish devotees. They spring from the same fountain as the extravagances of the fanatical Hindoo, or the emaciated faquir; and instead of being connected at any point with the religion of salvation, they might have existed though man had never heard of a Redeemer, nor our world been visited by the brightness of the Father's glory. In short, what foam is to the waters of the ocean, this phase of superstition is to the truth. Some creation of the human fancy is presented to the mind. Some object is conjured into being by a disordered nervous system, after the body has been macerated by fasting, or worn out by vigils, and then that object is invested with attributes which perpetuate the delusion by their alleged beauty and

attractions. How are we to view the fervour of St Francis of Assisi, for example, except by imputing his visions either to delirium or imposture? "He was often seen lifted, sometimes higher than a man's head, above the ground; and at last, after an extraordinary vision of a crucified seraph, which he witnessed from the top of a mountain, his body was found, when he came down, to have received the impression of the five wounds of Christ." "There was also in his right side a red wound, as if made by the piercing of a lance; and this often threw out blood, which stained the drawers and tunic of the saint." Now, unless we regard the whole of this as the fabrication of some compiler of lying legends, and so sweep the whole away as a clumsy fiction, we can impute it only to the animal excitement of a devotee whose nerves were strained till madness supervened, by the discipline and macerations through which he had passed. And this case thoroughly illustrates the religion of the visionary. It is some dream of man's distempered mind, or some creation of man's excited fancy, which forms the basis of the whole. The instant that men begin to wander from the simple Word of God, they may wander and wander still, until grossest delusions be hailed as truth, and legends which are worse than puerile be believed more readily than the Word of God. Hence the repugnance of Popery to the Bible; hence the shrinking of every visionary from its disenchanting truths; and hence the necessity of hiding the divine directory from men, before those who are interested in deceiving can succeed in imposing their deceptions upon us. Let any one who understands the simple truth of God dip into the Romish Breviary—let him glance at the garbage regarding St Denis, St Anthony, and other Popish demi-gods, on which the minds of Popish priests throughout the world are daily feeding, and the inquirer will see enough to humble him for poor humanity, as well as to explain the ecstasies and outbreaks of fanaticism often heard of within the pale of Romanism.

Bunyan has drawn the portrait of the visionary religionist in a way at once graphic, and truthful, and all his own. "You have some men," he says, "who cannot be content to worship in the temple, but must be aloft; no place will serve them but pinnacles—pinnacles, that they may be speaking in and to the air—that they may be promoting their own heady notions instead of solid truth; not considering that now they are where the devil would have them to be. They shout upon their points, their pinnacles; but let them look to it—there is difficult standing upon pinnacles; their neck, their soul is in danger. We read, God is in his temple, not upon these pinnacles."

But the grand touchstone of such fervours, or such pretences, is their effect upon the life. Do they bring the fervent one nearer to the Cross? Do the dreams, or the visions, tend to the augmentation of holiness, and to evergrowing conformity to Him who did no sin, and in whose mouth was found no guile? Does the abominable thing appear more abominable, and are the beauties of holiness more and more admired? Then the Spirit of God is overruling such things for good—the grand purposes for which the Saviour died are advancing in the life; he is seeing of the travail of his soul, and having begun the good work, he will carry it on to the day of the Lord. But on the other hand, do such visions and such fancies leave the mind as before, wedded to earth, and enamoured of earthly things? Are the aspirations after holiness as feeble as ever? Are the joys of religion as little relished as before? Is the Saviour neither more cordially received, nor more simply rested on? Then all is visionary—romantic—baseless. Such influences may end in Popery, or Puseyism, or the stigmata of St Francis, or the ecstasies of any saint in the Romish calendar; but the heart is not right with God. It is will-worship—it is voluntary humility—it is the flesh, not the spirit—the fancy of man, and not the grace of God, which reigns paramount. There is a disease which wastes the cheek, but gives brightness to the eye.

As the body is passing on inch by inch to the grave, a more than common brilliance gleams in the look of the dying one—it seems as if the eye became purer and more transparent as the body waxes feeble. And even so there may be much in the religion of the visionary to attract or to dazzle; but death is working after all. It is not the healthy, vigorous play of a mind refitted by a work of grace, and stamped anew with the impress of God's image. It is the fitful, the distorted, and often the grotesque that appears; and those who choose that religion for their rule, lie down in sorrow at the last.*

It commonly happens, however, that the hopes of the visionary are high in proportion as their foundation is flimsy.

> "Line o'er line,
> Terrace o'er terrace, nearer still and nearer
> To the blue heavens"

rises the airy pile. While the lowly believer walks softly, and often blushes, and is ashamed to look in hope toward God, the confidence of the class to whom we refer scarcely recognises a check. They speak of God as their Father, and the Son as their Redeemer, as if they already saw their name in the book of life. They refuse to entertain a question regarding their eternal prospects, or look for a moment to the foundation on which they repose. They reverse the maxim, "Be not high-minded but fear;" and seem to soar and rejoice when others are prostrate and abased. Now, we should be jealous over such conditions of the soul. They remind us of the youth who has just put on his arms, and is pleased with his scarlet, his epaulets, and sword—but what of the day of battle? Where will he be when the enemy comes down like a flood? And where will the visionary be when trial comes upon trial, like wave upon wave—where, above all, will he be when

* Jonathan Edwards has analysed the visionary's state of mind in various portions of his work on Religious Affections—a volume which should be read, marked, and inwardly digested by all who would escape from the perversions of truth, which were rife in that author's time, and are scarcely less common in ours.

the great white throne is set up, should the words MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, be seen in letters of fire above the Judge?

But the strangest aspect of the visionary religionist still remains to be mentioned. It is possible for a man of this class to deceive himself into the conviction that all is well with his soul, even while he is living in grossest iniquity. Ministers have been consulted—meetings for prayer have been attended—religious conversation has been a favourite with one, at least, who was perhaps an adulterer, and was actually plotting to poison his wife. And when he saw her in the agonies of death, internally corroded and burned by the poison which his own hand had administered, that man could exclaim,—"She is going home—she is going home to glory!" Nay, more, when judge and jury had combined unanimously to condemn him, that very man could asseverate his innocence still—he could take God to witness that he was so. This comes of the religion of excitement or sentiment, which never touches the conscience. This illustrates a thousand texts of Scripture; and proclaims, as in a voice of thunder, that he who trifles with the truth of God is searing conscience—instead of fleeing from the wrath to come, he is fleeing to it.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Sentimentalist.

"Some with Jesus are delighted
While he speaks of joys to come,
Thinking that to them is plighted
After death a happy home;
But the 'Cross,'—when He declares it,
'None but he who takes and bears it
Can my true disciple be;'
Few, how few! to this agree."

GERMAN HYMN.

The Sentimentalist.

Corruptions of true religion—Dr. Priestley—Robert Burns—His religious training—Its results—His early views—His wretchedness—Examples—Quotations from his letters—The poetry of religion—Explanation of his misery—His theology—The impiety of some of his poems—Cowper—Rousseau—John Keates—The sovereign panacea.

It would be difficult to enumerate the substitutes for true Christianity which different ages, and countries, and sects, have invented. Bringing their opinions to the Bible instead of deriving them from that inspired source, men have piled error upon error, till the highest product of the Divine Mind which is known to man is buried or obscured by the chaotic mass. So far has this been carried, that one of those who have attempted in modern times to make the truth of God quadrate with what is called, but falsely called, philosophy, has actually written a voluminous work to prove that the very truths contained in the Word of God, are but "early corruptions of Christianity."* The divinity of the Saviour—the atonement of Christ—justification by faith in his righteousness—the work of the Holy Spirit—in short, all that makes Christianity good news to a fallen race, was treated as a "corruption" by the wisdom of this world.

And while that was the case with the doctrines of our faith, similar perversions have appeared in regard to the application of truth to the soul and the conscience. While the Word of God makes it plain that only his

* Dr Priestley wrote a work with the title mentioned in the text.

own Spirit can make his truth practically influential, many have overlooked that intimation, and assumed that, by some human process, the Word of God can be made to produce saving effects. Hence innumerable errors. Hence human speculations substituted for the Spirit's teaching. Hence emotion and excitement taking the place of "the unction from the Holy One." Hence a mutilated revelation. Hence souls misled, and rationalism, or sentimentalism, or Popish corruptions, or Socinian negations, substituted for the revelation and redemption of Christ.

We are now to speak of Sentimentalism. The ravages which it commits, and the various aspects which it assumes, are beyond what can easily he told—as well attempt

"To count the sea's abundant progeny;"

but in the end, they all leave man precisely where they found him, or rather they thicken the folds of that veil which blinds him, and renders his ruin more certain. Of the effects of this phase of religion, we cannot quote a better illustration than that which the life of the poet Burns supplies. He was trained by godly parents, and familiarized at once with the Word and the service of God. Many things occur in his writings to show that he was familiar with the vital doctrines of revelation, and knew what should have been their bearing on the life of man. When he would give solemnity, for example, to certain of his vows, he could inscribe on the blank leaf of a Bible the words, "Ye shall not swear by my name falsely; I am the Lord;" and add, as if to augment the strength of the obligation, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." Truth in one of its forms was thus ascendant in his mind; and were this all that we know of the history of his soul, we might conclude that revelation had acquired its rightful authority there,—that in the noble mind of that wondrous man, grace had added its influence to the gifts which dignified his nature.

It is requisite, however, to study his character more minutely; and in doing so, we find how frail is every barrier, whether it be natural conscience, or rationalism, or sentiment and poetry, against the passions which tyrannize in the heart of unrenewed man. While Burns was yet an obscure youth, and years before he shone forth to amaze and to dazzle so many, he wrote to his father as follows:—"I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid adieu to all the pains, and uneasiness, and disquietudes, of this weary life; for, I assure you, I am heartily tired of it, and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it." He proceeds to say, "It is for this reason I am more pleased with the last three verses of the seventh chapter of the Revelations, than with any ten times as many in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me for all that this world has to offer." Now, all this is full of promise—this enthusiasm would be hailed by not a few as constituting pure religion; and yet we know that he who wrote these sentences lived to outrage the truth which he professed to admire. It was mere emotion; there was no work of grace, no guidance of that Spirit who leads into all truth, and the whole was therefore the gleam of a meteor, not the shining of the Sun. The melancholy which dictated such sentiments, inspired many of his verses in future years; and one cannot hear the wail of so noble a mind as it closes one stanza with the words,

> "But a' the pride of spring's return
> Can yield me nocht but sorrow;"

and another, exclaiming,

> "When yon green leaves fade frae the trees,
> Around my grave they'll wither,"

without detecting the impotency of the mere sentiment of religion when the power and demonstration of the Spirit do not give direction and force to the truth. Gifts the most noble, and genius the most transcendant,

only render man a more able self-tormentor when grace does not illuminate and guide him. In sober truth, they are as unavailing as the Jup, the Dyan, the Tup, and the Yoga of certain Hindoo ascetics.

But these are only the beginnings of our proof regarding the insufficiency of mere sentiment. The same gifted man, endowed as he was with remarkable versatility and power, was the victim of a sorrow which refused to be soothed. Amid the blaze of his reputation he wrote:—"I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns a commission, for I would not take in any poor, ignorant wretch, by selling out. Lately I was a sixpenny private, and a miserable soldier enough—now I march to the campaign a starving cadet, a little more conspicuously wretched." And again, as if he would open up the very fountains of his chagrin, or display the extent of the moral distemper which continued unhealed in his mind, he says:—"When I must escape into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim, What merit has he had, or what demerit have I had, in some state of pre-existence, that he is ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule and the key of riches in his puny fist, while I am kicked into the world, the sport of folly or the victim of pride?" Now, the man who recorded these bitter and distempered complaints was the author of the following exquisite lines:—

"Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed:
How He, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head;
How his first followers and servants sped,
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heaven's command.'

Or these:—

"But, when in life we're tempest-driven,
And conscience but a canker,
A correspondence fixed in Heaven
Is sure a noble anchor."

Now, the instructive point here is, that while this

gifted man could scatter gems around him like the brilliants emitted by the creations of Eastern fable, he was himself "poor, and wretched, and miserable"—the sport of passion—a thing driven of the wind and tossed. And why? Was there no anchorage for such a soul? —nothing to teach that troubled mind, that, as all things are guided by Him who is love, all things are overruled for good to them that love him? Had he never learned, or was there no one at hand to whisper, that it is possible for man, instead of indulging such violent outbreaks against the ways of God, to say, "I have learned, in all circumstances in which I am, to be therewith content?" Was there no power in the words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven?" Alas for man, when poetry, or genius, or sentimentalism, however exquisite, is the only guide of his soul in trouble! In this gifted man's life we read, with the clearness of a revelation, of the impotence of genius, or any natural gift, to restrain the passions, or promote the real happiness of man. Power, whether intellectual or imaginative, only enables man to go more signally astray, when it is not under the control of a pure conscience and sanctified reason.

But, amid all his gloom and despondency, had Burns no internal guide to enlighten and to cheer him? Had he got no hold of the truth which conducts the soul, amid a thousand perils and trials, to serenity and repose? He had a godly father, and his early training was in the best school of religion. Had that no effect on his conduct and history? Beyond all controversy, it had; but it was chiefly to deepen his wretchedness, and give a keener poignancy to his sorrow. He was one of those who could admire the drapery of religion, while he neglected itself. Like Sir Walter Scott, and many more, he was shrewd and quick to detect the hypocritical pretence to godliness; but he had no discernment of the intrinsic power of truth—and hence he was tortured to agony amid trials, even till he sometimes wished for death. Had he been utterly ignorant

of religion, conscience might have been more easily appeased; but, knowing it as he did to a certain extent, yet setting it often utterly at defiance, he just heaped woes upon himself by his own right hand. The fearful gift of genius, like the fatal gift of beauty, may thus help on man's misery, unless it be controlled by the wisdom which comes from above, and even Dr Currie was obliged at last to write of the man whom he loved and admired—"His temper now became more irritable and gloomy. He fled from himself into society, often of the lowest kind. And in such company, that part of the convivial scene in which wine increases sensibility and excites benevolence, was hurried over to reach the succeeding part, over which uncontrolled passion generally presided. He who suffers the pollution of inebriation, how shall he escape other pollution?" He adds, "Let us refrain from the mention of errors over which delicacy and humanity draw the veil."

Yet Burns had a God whom he often professed to revere. He wrote new versions of some of the psalms —he is the author of some poetical prayers—as well as of poems which one can scarcely read without tears; and from these we may ascertain what was the religion of Burns. And at the very most it was the religion of emotion, or the imagination. The holiness of God formed no element in it; and because that was left out, it was a kind of pantheistic figment which was worshipped, and not the true Jehovah. The wondrous Alp-clouds which are sometimes seen at sunset, fringed with gold by his light, are brilliant, no doubt, and gorgeous, but they are not the sun himself; and, in like manner, the ideal creations of men's minds, poetically attractive as they may be, are not the living and true God, though they are often substituted for him; and there is profoundest wisdom in the saying—"that those imaginations about the Godhead which make up a religion of poetry, are not enough for a religion of peace."* And it is curious to observe how Burns had worn away the

* Chalmers.

idea of God till it became evanescent and uninfluential. By his own confession, "the daring path Spinoza trod" was trod for a season by him; and his views of the Great ONE were such as could not restrain a single passion nor stand against a single temptation. In one of his dedications, he prays to the "great Fountain of honour, the Monarch of the Universe," and that was his substitute for the great personal I AM. In a prayer on the prospect of death, he says—

"If I have wandered in those paths
Of life I ought to shun,
As something loudly in my breast
Remonstrates I have done,
Thou knowest that thou hast form'd me
With passions wild and strong,
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong."

In other words, the Creator of all—the very Being whom the author of that prayer in the next stanza calls "All Good"—was the origin of Burns's transgressions, for he was the creator of Burns's "passions wild and strong." It is thus that the Eternal is accused by his creatures—it is thus that blame is shifted from the criminal to the Judge. The romance of religion—its "big ha' Bible"—its patriarchal priest—the simple melody of the songs of Zion,—all these Burns could admire, because there is poetry in them; but He whom the believer knows was not his resting-place. O, let it be said in pity!—Need we wonder though he who did so had to write, "Regret! Remorse! Shame! ye three hell-hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me! spare me!" Let the following stanza be calmly considered, and then say what is the verdict which truth brings in:—

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Misled by Fancy's meteor-ray,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
By passion driven;
But yet the *light* that led astray
Was *light from heaven.*"

We have another view of the religion of Burns presented in the following extract:—"Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper? Is not the 'Task'

a glorious poem? The religion of the 'Task,' bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and of nature—the religion that exalts, that ennobles man."* Now, had we no record of Burns's life, we might here conclude that, though anti-Calvinistic, he was devout in his piety and pure in his life, like Cowper whom he eulogised; but how completely must all right moral perception have been dulled, when such admiration could be lavished upon a poet who was at so many points the very antithesis of Burns! And again we say, how naturally does such a state of mind lead man to exclaim in the end, as Burns once did, "Canst thou minister to a mind diseased? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul tossed on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame tremblingly alive to the tortures of suspense, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries with thy inquiries after me?"

Such, then, is an exhibition of the native impotency of mere sentiment. The poetry of religion—its drapery—its music—its grand ceremonials, or its primitive simplicity—its gorgeous edifices—its ancestral associations, may all be admired; but none of these can charm man into holiness, or so change his heart as to guide to righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The first biographer, and most charitable friend of Burns, was obliged to record, that up till a period distant only a few months from his death, he could proceed from a sickroom to "dine at a tavern, return home about three o'clock in a very cold morning, benumbed and intoxicated," and by that process he hastened or developed the disease which laid him in the grave. His conduct, indeed, has drawn forth the high censures of men* who were neither prudes nor Puritans. The mere poetry of

* See Edinburgh Review for January 1809; or Lord Jeffrey's Contributions, vol. ii.

religion was substituted for the truth, and the result was moral confusion, and many an evil work.

To the case of Burns we might add the vapid sentimentalism of Rousseau, as exhibiting how easy it is to indulge in that, and in grossest libertinism together; or we might dwell on the case of another poet, Keates, who to the poetic sentiment added the religious in no ordinary degree, yet his own poetry could tell how well he understood the misery of earth, and how utterly unsoothed was

> "The weariness, the fever and the fret
> Here—where men sit and hear each other groan;
> Where palsy shakes a few sad, last grey hairs;
> Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin and dies!
> Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
> And leaden-eyed despair."

But we need not proceed. From the glimpse which we have taken, it is all too manifest that wisdom and strength from on high are needed alike to make man right and keep him so. What can genius do but mislead? What can the affections do but blind, and often distemper man? What can science accomplish against his wayward heart and headlong passions? What can all the gifts which God has heaped on man achieve, without Heaven's own panacea for our spiritual disease —free, sovereign, and almighty grace? All is vain— and the lives of thousands of the gifted prove it—till the wisdom which is first pure become the guide of the will, and the presiding power in the soul. The mere fact that the holiness of God is overlooked by unrenewed man, dooms him to hopeless degeneracy, and endless deterioration.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Mystic.

"The Mystics professed to elevate the soul above all sensible and terrestrial objects, and to unite it to the Deity in an ineffable manner .... to maintain a close and an intimate communion with him, by mortifying all the senses; by a profound submission to his will, even under the consciousness of perdition; and by an internal sanctity of heart, strengthened by a holy and sublime contemplation."—T. S. GRIMSHAWE.

The Mystic.

The religion of the heart—The mystic's character—His errors—Their origin—Emotion, not Revelation, his guide—An inward light supersedes the Holy Spirit—The spirit of Asceticism—Monks—Thomas á-Kempis—Antoinette Bourignon—Her pretensions—German mysticism—Madame Guyon—Her claims and character—The mysticism of Infidelity—Emanuel Swedenborg—The Inquisition—Truth sometimes found united with mysticism.

In contemplating the lights and shadows of a religious life, it would be wrong to overlook the character of the Mystic. Amid much that may be admired, there is much in it that must be regarded as unscriptural; and the study of such a case may help us to trace with greater accuracy the dim yet ineffaceable line, which separates the carnal from the spiritual in man—or that which is of human origin, from that which is divine.

No man who takes his religion from the Bible can fail to see, that until Christianity be planted in the heart, it is worthless—in the language of James, it is vain. The delusion which haunts the mind of man regarding the sacredness which attaches to buildings, to church architecture, to ecclesiastical forms and ceremonies, may be wide-spread; but it is not less ruinous—it is antagonistic to the whole spirit of the Saviour's religion. "Give me thy heart," is the constant demand of the Great Spirit; and unless the heart be given, all is deceptive, as gaudy ornaments on a coffin or a hearse are worthless to the dead. There is no more painful proof that man is still ignorant of God, and of his re-

vealed mind, than to see him becoming a zealot on the subject of tapers and vestments, and priestly decorations, as if such beggarly elements could ever constitute a part of a spiritual religion.

But the very importance of the spiritual life, and the prominence which is assigned to it in the Word of God and the Christian's experience, has led to another error —shadowy, dim, and impalpable, but nevertheless disastrous in the domain of spiritual things. That error is nothing less than substituting what is supposed to be spiritual life in the place of its Author; putting our emotions, our spiritual perceptions, and eventually our dreams, our delusions, and fanaticisms in the room of Him who is the only unchanging light—the only unchanging truth—at once the fountain and the sustainer of all spiritual existence. Tranquil meditation has been made by many a substitute for spiritual activity. Dreamy reveries have supplanted the revelations of God. Man's own feelings have become the standard of truth and holiness; and, instead of listening to the oracles of God as the only fountain of wisdom, many have listened to their own heart, and reckoned that at once their wisdom and their guide. Even judges on the bench, have decided causes by pretended inspiration as their rule.

The leading characteristic of the mystic, is the supposition that all knowledge relating to the soul is communicated immediately from God to every individual believer—it is, in truth, a particular revelation to each separate mind. It is stamped by God, the mystic says, directly upon the heart: it is imparted straightway to the understanding, so that absolute infallibility is the necessary condition of the mystical frame of mind. All the mystic's knowledge, feelings, and emotions, are in effect divine. The standard is within. It is the direct product of the Eternal Spirit in the bosom of man. Following it, the soul is blessed—neglecting it, the soul is wretched, and becomes like a wandering star, or rather like a star extinguished. In such a case, it is

not the light of the Sun of Righteousness which is beheld. At the best, it is the cloud which he tinges with hues which are perhaps gorgeous and attractive, but which are at the same time as changing and unsubstantial as they are brilliant.

The origin of this phase of the religious life is to be sought in the perverted use of our own consciousness. We feel certain changes wrought within us. Light is seen where all was darkness before. Knowledge takes the place of ignorance. What once repelled now attracts. In the train of these things, new likings and new desires arise, and the mystic broods or rejoices over these new-born emotions—he broods over them till he produces the belief that inward contemplation affords both the light and the joy of man. He thus becomes his own standard of faith, and his own rule of action. The Word of God is superseded by the inner light, and that which God has magnified above all his name gives place to the fervours, the fancies, and ill-regulated emotions of a mind heated and excited by dwelling on the visionary and unreal. "Les mystiques pretendent," says a high authority, "que le regne de l'Esprit, et celui de la lettre sont deux regnes hostiles et incompatibles, que la verité provient d'une illumination interieure, independante de l'Ecriture."*

The multiform aspects of mysticism scarcely admit of being classified. Its spirit was rampant in many a monk. It was found in many a desert, and in many a cell, pampered into strength by the habits of the ascetic, and perpetuated by ignorance of God's truth on the one hand, and by earnest spirits poring over their own emotions on the other. Even in such minds as that of Thomas à Kempis, the spirit of mysticism formed a large admixture; and no one who knows the liberty wherewith Christ makes free, can read his "Imitation of Christ" without perceiving, amid all its beauty and all its aspirations after holiness, that the Spirit's work is sometimes substituted for the Saviour's; that man's hopes are made

* M. D'Aubigné.

to rest on his own emotions, or his own spiritual attainments, more than on the truth which is as unchanging as Jehovah is. A Kempis, in short, was in no small measure a legalist, as others have been swayed by other principles to the side of Antinomianism. His was not the spirit of liberty, which is at once the resolute opponent of sin and yet the rejoicing badge of the redeemed of God.

But mysticism has been carried even farther than this. It has passed into the domain of philosophy, and some mystics have pretended that true science is "learned from God alone by the inward light of the invisible man." Inspiration has been claimed for human ravings; and amid lonely deserts some have professed to hold such converse with God, as to acquire their knowledge by direct intuition, without the use of books or other human means.

Examples, however, will best illustrate this peculiar state of mind, and among the most conspicuous of modern mystics, we may rank Antoinette Bourignon. From her youth, she had been inclined to the study of mystic writings, and as she advanced in years, she found many to favour her predilections. Fenelon, the devout Archbishop of Cambray, became her patron; and after various transitions, she at last announced that in her communings with God, many sacred mysteries had been unlocked to her mind. The character of a prophetess was speedily claimed for her, and even in Scotland, where such reveries rarely meet with favour, owing to the training of the young in substantial truth, her incoherent effusions found apologists and admirers. One of its ministers was deposed for adopting her opinions, which were condemned by its highest ecclesiastical authority as "freighted with impious, pernicious, and damnable doctrines." Believing herself to be inspired, she pretended to hold a commission from God. Instigated by her own ardent feelings, and founding upon them, not upon the revelation which God has given, her aim was to promote immediate intercourse with the

Celestial; and so far was she the victim of her own delusions, that she at last arrogated a knowledge of all things human and divine, greater than was possessed even by apostles and prophets. Her very language, she alleged, was sometimes inspired, while pretensions the most extravagant emerged from her heated fancy. Even the Redeemer was deemed only a type of her, while she claimed to be the mother of all who were converted. In short, beginning, as many have done, in simple mysticism, or substituting man's feelings for God's truth—a fluctuating for a fixed thing—a wave for a rock, she advanced through various degrees of delusion, till a spurious inspiration became her habitual guide, and the mind of God was supposed to be conveyed by her to man in a new revelation!

Now, it is to be observed that all this is the legitimate result of the mystic's principle. Founding upon his own feelings and not on the rock of truth, he soon drifts away from all that is stable; the mind becomes like an ocean without a shore, a stream without banks, or a ship without a pilot. The inward light is put in the place of that which shines from heaven, and the creature affects to do the work of Him who enlightens every man. It is, in truth, a subtle form of infidelity. Like Popery, it sets aside the fixed word of the Eternal God for the feelings, the convictions, and delusions of men. It is a comet, not the sun, which illuminates the mystic.

Madame Guyon is another of the mystics, or quietists, whose history and opinions illustrate our present topic. Early a widow, and deeply emotive in her temperament, she gave herself up to spiritual contemplation. The concubine or private wife of Louis XIV., Madame Maintenon, became her patroness at Paris. In Archbishop Fenelon she also found a friend of congenial temperament, and mysticism of an intense type began to be taught, even within the precincts of the most abandoned court in Europe. But contentions on this subject at last arose. Madame Guyon was cast into prison,

and those who had befriended her were either disgraced or obliged to withdraw their protection. But the system was matured notwithstanding, and a new revelation was circulated among men in place of that which embodies the whole mind of God for our salvation. That system has been thus described:—"God makes himself known to the soul by divine touches, by tastes, by gentle illapses, and ineffable sweetnesses. Men's affections being thus moved, the soul sinks into a delicious repose which rises above all delights, all ecstasies, all notions, all divine speculations—a state in which she knows neither what she feels nor what she is."* A description this of an Indian faquir, rather than of a devout Christian—of one who is the dupe of his own feelings, rather than an intelligent believer in God and his Christ.

But the pretensions of mysticism are not yet exhausted. To a large extent in Germany, and in a growing measure in our own land, similar extravagance has appeared. Pretending to set aside all faith in the Word of God, and transferring man's confidence to the light within, men have arisen elaborately to fabricate system upon system, of which the fountain or the inspiration is all from the human heart. They acknowledge no standard but their own feelings, and every man is literally and absolutely a law to himself in spiritual things. By this new phase of infidelity, the Word of God is either mutilated or discarded, and men who are feeding their souls on the suggestions of their own fancies, appear the while to believe that they have arrived at truth in its highest forms. But the whole may be traced to the evil heart of unbelief. Men do not ask, What has Jehovah revealed? but, What does man feel? It is not, What are the words which the Holy Ghost teaches? but, What are the imaginations of man's heart?—and all who understand the religion of the

* See Stowell on the Work of the Spirit, p. 288. The chapter contains a condensed view of the tenets of the mystics. See also Cowper's Life and Works by Grimshawe, vol. viii., for an account of the mystics, and translations by Cowper from Guyon; also Errors regarding Religion, by J. Douglas, Esq. of Cavers.

Saviour will perceive that this is only a new aspect, or an old one restored, of that aversion to God's simple truth which lies at the foundation of spiritual error in every form. Whenever men substitute their own fervours, their own natural affections, their own imaginings, for the teaching of the Spirit of God, they become essentially mystics; nay more, they are practically unbelievers, and supersede the truth of God by the dreams or speculations of man. They are as thoroughly self-deceived as were the Thugs of India, who had listened to the savage promptings of their own fierce souls, till they believed that their divinities were pleased by the murders which were perpetrated by their devotees.

But in the infidel as well as the nominal Christian, the flesh can counterfeit the Spirit, and infidelity accordingly has mystics of its own. "An inward light from heaven," by whomsoever claimed, if disjoined from the Word of God, is, in effect, subversive of the truth. Man feels free from the restraints which the Holy One imposes when he can persuade himself that he has "a Bible written in the heart," or enjoys a direct revelation from God to every man apart.* Is it not strange that men endowed with reason could ever persuade themselves that they could not only contemplate the essence of God, but be thereby purified and prepared for the heaven of heavens?

But so it is. Men of no ordinary powers have been duped in this manner by their own feelings, and given up to believe a lie when they swerved from the simple truth. Emanuel Swedenborg, who holds a very high rank among such religionists, is not the only pretender to revelations in modern times. Imagination in many has broken loose from the control of reason, and rioted upon the spoils of all that is simple and scriptural in the religion which the Holy Spirit plants in the heart from the Word of God, as the grand storehouse of truth. Infidelity has been made glad. The ignorant have been turned out of the way. The unstable have been ren-

* See Stowell, p. 291.

dered more unstable still by such hallucinations—hallucinations the more to be deplored because they have sometimes appeared in minds which are otherwise accomplished, vigorous, or acute. But "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and he only is safe who has the Word of God in his hand, and the Spirit of God in his heart, pointing to the way and saying—"Walk ye in it." Self-reliance, trusting in our own heart, walking in the light which we ourselves have kindled—whither can that lead but to darkness and sorrow at the last? To be ever hovering in the dreamy land of mystery, and forsaking the firm and solid path in which God would have us to go—in what can that end but the second death?

It is not the least instructive aspect of this subject, that it may explain to us the spirit which founded and upheld the Inquisition, built up as it was by the bones and cemented by the blood of some millions of victims. Beyond all controversy, many of the perpetrators of those atrocities which must eternally disgrace the religion of Rome, thought they were doing God service in the butcheries which they committed. Listening to their own deceitful hearts—greedily adopting what their fanaticism suggested, and making their own passions their rule, they murdered and mangled in the service of a creed which they thought originated in heaven, but which was, in truth, an emanation of their own hearts. It was the very principle of mysticism, in as much as it was substituting man's fancies for the truth of God. It was the subjective convictions of the zealot or the devotee made the rule of man, in place of that Word of the Lord which endures for ever.

Yet we should not fail to observe, that in many cases there is much in the character of the mystic which is sound or scriptural. The gentle Cowper, whose godliness none will question, has lent the embellishment of his verse to some of the writings of Madame Guyon. Her friend Fenelon, though destitute of moral courage, was unquestionably devout in his spirit; but these and

similar cases only make us lament the more over the ravages which such delusions occasion. Wherever the thoughts or opinions, the fervours and the fancies of man are made equivalent to revelation, there, we repeat, will soon be confusion and every evil work. In other words, whenever men rely on their feelings to furnish either a standard of belief or a guide in duty, they are tottering to their fall; and there are thousands in the modern churches who should lay the warning to heart.

But perhaps that phase of mysticism which has appeared in our day, and which would develop religion in all its forms from the heart of man, is the most to be dreaded. It makes inspiration and genius synonymous. It ranks Moses, Jesus, Milton, and Bunyan, in the same class; and describes them, and all who resemble them in their influence over their fellow-men, as inspired by God, or guided by what these new mystics deem the Divinity. It will be noticed at a glance, however, that this is a new aspect of infidelity—new as regards this island, though common on the continent of Europe. Its tendency, or its aim, is to degrade religion. This mystic infidelity effaces the true God, and puts man in his place. It substitutes the spirit which is in the creature for the Spirit of Jehovah. It puts Paganism on a level with the religion of God; and subverts the work of redemption without the odiousness of an honest, open denial. With this tendency, or this aim, such mysticism will no doubt deceive unstable souls. It will substitute a taper for the sun, and give just light enough to help men to go more fatally astray, but under the pretext of tracing all up to God, it in effect dethrones him; and leaves poor, sin-laden man without any hope except in his own right arm, or any light but the sparks which he himself has kindled. How far that is from true humility or deep wisdom, we need not tarry to explain.

Faith in its Simplicity.

A Persian Soofi—Henry Martyn—His view of the doctrines of Christianity—Simple faith—Its fruits—The will of God—Man rarely means all that he says in prayer—The simple-minded believer aims at that—Illustrations—Dr. William Gordon—Rev. John Macdonald—Lady ——.

A Persian Soofi once asked the missionary, Martyn, where he would find the doctrines of Christ; and the reply was profound, though simple, "You will find them all in Christ." The devoted man meant to tell the inquirer that he might study a book, and yet come short of saving truth. He might learn a creed, and yet not be a Christian. He might adopt a system different from that which he held by descent from his fathers, and still be only changing one delusion for another. Martyn, therefore, adopted the course which precluded error, as far as man's precaution could, though it must have appeared foolishness to the wisdom of the Soofi. Receive the Saviour of the lost, and in him receive all truth; but truth, in regard to salvation, apart from him, is but an abstraction, a shadow, a theory, or a name.

Now, it is when man is taught to act in spirit on Martyn's suggestion, that he exhibits one of the highest manifestations of the Christian life. The simple reception of the Saviour—unwavering repose upon him—entire satisfaction with him, as the chief among ten thousand—forms one of the most attractive developments of the Christian life which we are permitted to witness upon earth. It is not the man who struggles,

and who argues his way to the Saviour, by what is deemed an intellectual effort; nor the man who doubts, and inquires, and falters, and hesitates, as to whether the Saviour be a Saviour or not, who manifests most clearly the true greatness of the soul. It is he who takes the divine mind, and rests upon it, just as the Divinity gave it. It is he who in simplicity says, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;" or it is he who confidingly prays, "Do as thou hast said,"—it is such a man that indicates the highest style of faith, and approximates the most closely to Him who always did what was well-pleasing to the Father. Music may partake of a highly composite character, or be simple, majestic, and sublime. Like some grand organ, it may awe, and almost appal; or like the Eolian harp, natural and most soothing, it may calm and tranquillise the soul. The latter is the emblem of simple faith.

We should not fail to notice the errors which abound upon this subject, for they are instructive. Men hear so much regarding pardon, that, by a strange fallacy, they are prone to conclude that they are pardoned. They hear so much of a Saviour, that they hasten to the soothing conclusion that they are saved. It is as if a dying man were to conclude that he is not dying, merely because he hears of life, or a beggar that he is not starving, merely because he hears of bread. And so in regard to faith. Merely because they hear of it, many conclude that they have it,—and thus the soul may perish under the power of self-deception. But even when men begin to be in earnest about faith, they are often more engrossed with the *term* than the *thing*. And what is faith? It can scarcely be described or defined by a reference to any single act of the mind, and the Scriptures describe it by a wide variety of terms. *Coming* unto Jesus is one of these. *Looking* unto Jesus is another. *Apprehending*, or *laying hold of*, the Saviour, is a third. *Receiving* Christ is a fourth. *Fleeing for refuge* is a fifth. *Trusting* in the Lord—*leaning upon* him,—these, and countless other expressions, all combine to teach us

what believing is. It is the act of the heart rather than of the understanding, and the whole soul is in it. The truth of God in the gospel, more specially in the promises, is its foundation or warrant. The mercy and the love of God constitute its encouragement. The Spirit of God is its author. The Son of God is its great object. Salvation is its end, and the glory of God in that salvation the crown and consummation of the soul. It is in this way that man is justified. It is thus that peace is diffused through the soul, and thus that our covenant with death is annulled, through the heart's cleaving to Him who brought life and immortality to light in the gospel.

Contemplate for a little the character now sketched. The simple-minded believer deems the Word of God enough in every difficulty. Even though he should be walking in darkness, and seeing no light, he will trust in the name of the Lord. Of that Word he can say like Jeremiah, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and they were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." His mind is purified thereby. His heart is warmed. His sins are mortified. His faith becomes simpler, and therefore stronger, from day to day. The written Word guides him evermore to the Incarnate Word, and there he finds the fulness of Him who filleth all in all. Such a believer is gradually schooled out of all self-confidence. He is like the vine tree which cannot grow upright without a stay, but having one, it clambers and ascends till its rich and luxuriant produce is seen in abundant clusters pendent in the air. And the progress that is made is proportioned to the simplicity of the soul's reliance upon truth. Its supreme desire is to be found "looking unto Jesus;" and in that attitude it walks directly forward to be satisfied with the goodness of God's house. Others may struggle; it submits. Others may challenge or debate; it acquiesces. Others may ask, "How can these things be?" The simple-minded believer only asks, Hath the Lord spoken? and replies, Then he will perform. It is

thus that the most perfect serenity is produced. "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee!" is a description of the feelings which actuate the heart of such a believer. In brief, he is kept in perfect peace, according to the prophet's words, because "he is stayed on God." Jonathan Edwards, "the greatest of the sons of men," is perhaps the most signal instance upon record of this lowly trust in combination with holy peace.

"Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven," is one of the deepest and most comprehensive portions of the Word of God. Little do men sometimes think how much is contained in that brief clause. The lips utter the prayer; but does the heart mean what the lips are asking? In heaven, the will of God is universal law. Not a thought jars with it—not a wish wanders from the will of the Supreme. Now, when we ask that that will may be done on earth, as completely and constantly as it is done in heaven, what may be implied in our petition? It may be Jehovah's will to take away the delight of our eyes with a stroke. We ask him to do that; but do we really wish that he should do according to what we ask? It may be his will to leave us friendless in the world, for he may see that nothing else will bring us to the Friend of sinners. It may be his will to lay his hand upon us in woes and sorrows akin to those which befell the much-tried Job. Are we really minded that such things should befall, if they come within the range of Jehovah's unchallengeable pleasure? Ah! too often, we fear, such thoughts are far from our mind. The words of submission are uttered, but the heart does not beat responsive. It is the service of the lip that we express. It is not with the soul that the Hearer of prayer is served.

And what is the result? He comes in holy sovereignty and takes away the delight of our eyes. He sends some heavy trial—and sorrow perhaps crowds upon sorrow, like wave upon wave in a troubled sea,—all according to his will; and what are then the feelings

of many a heart? Like Rachel, we weep, and refuse to be comforted; we are surprised, or perhaps crushed, and half heart-broken because Jehovah has done according to his will, in terms of our petition. We did not mean what we said. We uttered the words of submission, but did not cherish the feeling; and the result is, that murmuring gives double poignancy to our sorrow, or fighting against God lacerates the wound which was sufficiently deep and sufficiently painful before.

But, in the case of the simple-minded believer, this intensity of agony is prevented by a habitual submissiveness of soul. It is his prayer and endeavour to merge his will in God's; and this, we repeat, appears among the highest attainments that man can make on earth. It is thus that the man of simple faith, though perhaps of unlettered mind, is enabled to exhibit a depth of intelligence in divine things—a firmness under trial, and a good hope when much that seems adverse or untoward occurs, which baffles the energy and confounds the wisdom of far more gifted men. The secret of the Lord is with him. The mysteries of the kingdom are made plain. He has food to eat which the world does not know—it is the hidden manna—the very bread of life.

Happily for the church of Christ, and the glory of his Spirit, illustrations of this simple faith are not uncommon. It was the wise advice of a stripling in years, but a master and a sage in Israel—we mean the Rev. Andrew Gray of Glasgow—to those who were afflicted by spiritual difficulties, that they should "misken such doubts" as haunted them—they should refuse to recognise them, or proceed to act as if they did not exist; and many have had wisdom to act on the advice. Among the most signal instances that occur to us, is the case of Dr William Gordon of Hull. As a zealous philanthropist, and an accomplished physician, there was a period in his life when the one thing needful did not obtain the prominence which reason and religion, which time and eternity alike demand for it. But the set time

to favour him arrived. By the grace of God, Dr Gordon took up his position decidedly among those who are taught to take up their cross and follow Christ; and never was there a believer more simple-minded than he. "I have read a great many sceptical books, ancient and modern," he said, in sending a message to certain infidels; "it is all very fine, but very fallacious. They are very plausible, but can give no consolation in a dying hour. The New Testament is the book. We must fall back on that. We can only obtain peace by casting ourselves on Jesus, putting reasoning aside, and asking him to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit."* "All the consideration of my own mind," he says again, "all the analysis I can make of it, proves the truth of Christianity. It so provides for all the wants of my soul! If I were to begin to reason, I would get into a maze; but I am told to come as a little child, and then I find perfect peace." And yet again, he once exclaimed—"All human learning is of no avail. Reason must be put out of the question. I reasoned, and debated, and investigated, but I found no peace till I came to the gospel as a little child, till I received it as a babe. Then such a light was shed abroad in my heart, that I saw the whole scheme at once, and I found pleasure the most indescribable. I saw there was no good deed in myself. Though I had spent hours in examining my conduct, I found nothing I had done would give me real satisfaction. It was always mixed up with something selfish. But when I came to the gospel as a child, the Holy Spirit seemed to fill my heart. I then saw my selfishness in all its vivid deformity, and I found there was no acceptance with God, and no happiness, except through the blessed Redeemer. I stripped off all my own deeds—threw them aside—went to him naked—he received me as he promised he would, and presented me to the Father—then I felt joy unspeakable, and all fear of death at once vanished."

* See "The Christian Philosopher Triumphing over Death," &c. By Newman Hall, B.A.

Only once more, as death drew near, Dr Gordon remarked, when the state of his health was made a topic, "O, speak to me about Christ, I want to hear of him—no other subject interests me so much;" and when he was asked how he felt compared with a week before, he replied, "Oh, I have so little interest in my physical condition, that I do not remember. . . . . When once we feel the love of Christ, it gives new views of every thing." It was thus that a man of sanguine spirit, and many accomplishments, was taught to behave himself like a weaned child; and because he did so, he enjoyed what he called "a peace unbroken and indescribable." It is not the struggle, and the effort, and the fixed purpose on man's part. It is not argument, it is not eloquence, it is not gifts and power—though all these may be consecrated to the glory of God, and have often been so. It is simple coming, simple looking, simple resting upon Christ, that ministers grace and strength to man; and when that is our character, the beauties of holiness appear in the life, the result of the Spirit's graces commingled, as light is the result of the primary colours blended into one. There is great depth of meaning in the words of Simeon on his deathbed: "I do not *think* now—I am *enjoying*." He was receiving all from his God; and we need not wonder to hear him say, "I lie here waiting for the issue without a fear, without a doubt, and without a wish." It was simple faith honouring God, and therefore honoured by him.

The missionary, John Macdonald, was another servant of God, in whom the beautifying results of a simple faith were conspicuously displayed. Though possessed of more than ordinary mental ability, and though he had cultivated his powers to an extent which might have given him no mean place among influential minds, he felt it to be at once his duty and his rejoicing to yield himself up in holy subjection and simplicity to the control of the truth. Like most thinkers, Macdonald had an arduous struggle to maintain with his own heart and nature, ere he could comprehend the

simple gospel of the grace of God, or consent to let God in Christ be all. He tried to come as a believer to Christ, and then his believing would have been the price of his redemption—it would no longer have been a gift upon God's part, but a purchase on the creature's; or he would have come with his repentance, and his tears, and his struggles, and with these he would have made sure of the Holy One's regards. At last, however, the scales fell from his eyes, and then it was seen that all he had to do, all he could do, was to come as a sinner, and *be made a believer*. When that simple perception dawned upon his mind—that is, when he understood the gospel—he resigned himself, with the gentleness of sleeping infancy, to that power which comes from heaven to guide men to it. None ever more simple in their trust—none more implicit in reliance, and none more serenely happy than the missionary Macdonald. "How glorious and all-sufficient a Saviour is Christ!" was his exclamation. "This is a reflection which I trust I have been enabled in some measure to realise. Every thing I can desire is in him—*atonement*, to remove my fearful guilt—*righteousness*, to entitle me to eternal life, with all its unspeakable benefits here and hereafter—a constant *representative* before my holy and gracious God. My *affliction* is but the smiting of his merciful hand, and therefore it is an *ointment* savouring of heaven. *Death* he has passed through, and in it he stands ready to receive me. My present *cares* I can cast on him, even to the smallest lawful matter; and every thing that is wise, right, and good, he will do for me. I have his own word for all these things. What a Lord and Saviour for a poor, sinful, afflicted creature! How blessed to trust in him—to see him by faith, with 'grace on his lips,' and 'the government on his shoulders!'"

Such was the simple faith of that servant of God—a model of strength evolved from weakness—of hope superseding emotions akin to despair—and perfect peace supplanting the restlessness, the struggles, and the tears, which accompany or flow from the sinner's attempt,

however disguised, to work out a righteousness for himself.

But one of the sublimest exhibitions of this simple trust in God that has ever been put on record is found in the Life of the Rev. Thomas Scott. "Think," he says, "of dear Lady ——; her eldest son executed as a murderer, a hardened wretch till the last hour; the only hope this, that in his rage in casting himself off, the rope broke, and he lived till another was fetched, perhaps ten minutes,* and seemed during that space softened, and earnestly cried for mercy; *yet I never heard from her lips one murmuring word.*" She was silent, for the Lord did it; she was still, and knew that he was God; and thus, though the heart might by nature be breaking, that simple-minded believer, so stricken and so tried, was made strong in the Lord, and the power of his might. It is the bruised reed not broken, and the smoking flax not quenched. It is the Lord redeeming his promise: "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." The shadow of the Cross is the favourite retreat of such a soul; and one hour there, where the sad and the joyful, the humbled and the exalted, the self-condemned and the pardoned, are so beautifully blended—enables the simple-minded believer to understand why we should count it all joy when we fall into divers trials.

Is it asked, Why is such honour put upon simple faith? For many reasons. It lays man in the dust, and exalts Jehovah to the throne. It involves a condemnation of man's guilt and folly in departing from his God at first, when he preferred a lie to the word of the only living and true God. As man fell through unbelief, it is righteous and just and good that he should rise, if he ever rise at all, by the grace which stands most opposed to that. For that and for other reasons, simple faith is largely honoured; while the man of simple faith is often serenely happy, or perfectly blest.

* At the earnest request of the criminal, the providential respite was extended to an hour.

But most of all this simple faith is honoured, and the simple-minded believer stands high among the people of God, because he in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells is appropriated, rested on, and rejoiced in by such a soul. Its language is not merely, Give me pardon for Christ's sake; give me holiness; give me heaven for him. It rather seeks the Saviour himself, and in him, heaven and every blessing. It rejoices, no doubt, in the covenant, but it is as that covenant is all fulfilled in our covenant Head. It rejoices in a pardon, but it is sought in Christ, who is exalted a prince and a Saviour to grant it. It rejoices in the promise of the Spirit, but it is because that promise is verified in Him in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. That is the secret of the honour which is put upon simple faith. To it Christ is all; and when that is the case, what but blessedness can be the lot of Him who can look on the brightness of the Father's glory; who is engrafted into Him who is full of grace and truth, and out of whose fulness we may all receive! Reposing upon that Rock, the soul is safe from every surge. When tempted to pry, it exclaims, with a modern philosopher: "On such subjects I have no confidence in reason. I trust only in faith; and, as far as we ought to inquire, we have no other guide but revelation."* When tempted to doubt, it asks, Has the Lord spoken, and will he not perform? When buffeted and tried, it lays the hand upon the mouth, exclaiming, Why should a living man complain? The Word—the pure and simple Word of God is its resting-place, and there it is strong in the Lord and the power of his might.

* Sir H. Davy. Collected Works, vol. ix., p. 381.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Growth in Grace.

"Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Arm'd by faith, and wing'd by prayer,
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,
God's own hand shall guide thee there.
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days;
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise."

ANON.

Growth in Grace.

Progress an universal law—Consecrated in the exercises of religion—The normal condition of the soul—Spiritual vicissitudes—Growth the result of the whole—Means of producing it—The godliness of the poor—Progress reviewed—Examples of growth in grace—A Jewish rabbi—Paul—Dr. Chalmers.

To look abroad over the family of man, and witness its struggles for improvement and progress, brings home some deep and solemn lessons to the meditative mind. There has been no time, and there is no land in which these struggles have not been made, except where men have degenerated into a close affinity with the beasts which perish. The grossest or the most embruted of the heathen, and the most degraded of civilized men—like the drunkard and some others—have ceased, indeed, to advance, except in degradation. But wherever mind is not overtasked or crushed by more than ordinary crime, the law of progression universally prevails. Man does not feel himself to be what he ought to be. He is restless, scheming, and ceaselessly pursuing something which he has not—something which is projected into the distant future, and which always appears to flee as he pursues it. Empiricism has suggested its baseless theories —Utopianism has come forward with its gilded proposals for ameliorating the condition of humanity—senators in their wisdom—despots with their ukases—philosophers with their speculations—visionaries in their dreams—have all attempted to raise man up to what he

ought to be; but by their speculations and their efforts, they have often helped rather to sink man deeper and deeper into misery. Science, governments, philosophy, have combined their power—and all tend to prove, concerning our species as well as each individual, that we are not what we feel we might be. That progress is made upon the whole, is certain; but each new ascent only prepares us to see how much is yet to be done. The close of one struggle is but the commencement of another. That prepares the way for another, and another—for in the bosom even of degraded man there lurks a latent presentiment that perfection should be his goal—that eternity is his duration, and infinity his home. He is grand, majestic, awful, as a moral being, even in his ruins.

Now, the Word of God affords the noblest scope for this progressive tendency, or the operation of this universal law. It proves its heavenly origin by such sayings as these—"Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect,"—"Be ye holy, for I am holy,"—"He that hath the believer's hope in him, purifies himself, as God is pure;" and then it sends us forth on our endeavours after ceaseless advancement, or ceaseless approximation to the standard which Heaven has set up. At the very moment when the earnest soul is bewailing its shortcomings, and fearing lest it fall away rather than advance, it is forced to admire the purity of the rule by which it should act—it sees that no standard but a perfect one could be sanctioned by a perfect God, and it therefore pants, and perseveres, and presses upward, never thinking that it has already attained, or is already perfect. As water seeks a level, does the soul of man seek to advance; for if it stagnates, it corrupts. True and vigorous religion thus finds its emblem in the light of heaven,—it must spread outward,—and if we attempt to prevent it from spreading, we extinguish it. Or, religion finds its emblem in the pebble cast into a pool—the waves spread from the centre to the shore in ever-widening circles. Or, it

finds an emblem in the beacon on the rock, throwing its light into the darkness to warn men away from danger or death. Or, finally, true, vigorous, spiritual religion in the soul finds an emblem in the banyan tree. That tree shoots forth its branches on every side—these branches, in process of time, take root—from that root other branches spread to produce other trees in their turn, till a marvel in the vegetable world be seen. In like manner, new accessions of grace should evermore be made by the soul. It receives light from on high—it should reflect that light to others, and thus subserve the high purpose of glorifying God by doing good to man.

And this is the healthy, or the normal condition of a soul on earth. As the Scriptures recognise "babes," and "young men," and "old men," in the church of Christ, every believer, while here below, is evermore straining after a more advanced position—he would rise nearer and nearer to the stature of a perfect man in Christ. He would go on unto perfection, and acts unconsciously on the saying of Paul:—"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." He would add to his faith virtue, and all the Christian graces, and, regarding every new attainment which he makes as only a higher vantage-ground from which to make another and another, the believer never thinks that his work is done, but onward and upward he presses, till in the end his reward is embodied in a privilege like that which Enoch enjoyed. He "walked with God;" and the believer endures or enjoys as seeing Him who is invisible. At one time he may be weeping, and at another rejoicing. Now he may be upon the mount, anon he may be in depths, like those in which Jonah lay. Now there may be a keen struggle demanded, and amid it the soul may be haunted by the fear that no progress is made. Again, the soul may be carried gently forward by the grace of God—ere ever the believer is aware, his soul may be filled with joy

unspeakable. Once more, his progress may be made in the dark—it may resemble the driving of a mine, rather than advancing amid the light of perfect day. But, whatever be the process, a profounder self-knowledge is the result, with ever increasing desires after conformity to Christ—more intense hatred of sin—more constraining love to the Saviour—a more tender conscience—a more heavenly mind, and a more thorough appreciation of the holy, the good, and the true. That soul will soar when it can, and when it cannot soar it will climb, with perfection for its goal, and heaven for its home. The religion of God is more and more transcribed from the pages of the Bible upon the fleshly tablets of the heart; and the image of God is slowly traced anew upon the soul which grace is thus moulding.

But while he is thus advancing, the believer may often fear that he is rather falling away, and his complaints may sometimes excite the mirth of the unthinking, or the wonder of those who never knew the plague of their own hearts. The explanation is, that as the believer advances, he can try himself by a higher standard and a purer test. The nearer he approaches to God, the more lowly does he feel that he must lie, till he arrives at the full conviction, that he is less than the least of all saints; and all this beautifully explains how the holiest are ever the humblest and the most profoundly self-condemned. Paul, for example, ranked himself among the least of all saints; and some have been able to explain his language on that subject only by deeming it hyperbole, or an instance of a spurious modesty in the apostle. But, in truth, his language was that of calmest soberness. He could test himself by a higher standard than the sons of men, for he walked more closely with God than they. As he saw light in God's light, that enabled him to behold his own spiritual shortcoming with singular clearness; and, "Behold, I am vile," became the language of his heart. "Wo is me, for I am a man of unclean lips," was precisely the expression of his soul's condition; and the

Spirit who guided Paul leads to similar results, wherever men are taught that truth by which the God of all grace is guiding his sons and his daughters to glory.

The means, in addition to the Word of God, by which this growth in grace is accomplished, are very diverse; but a limited degree of spiritual discernment enables us to discover that they are always exquisitely adapted to our various constitutions. Are we apt to grow spiritually dull and sluggish, as if we could reach a point where we may repose or be inactive? A thorn to stimulate is speedily planted in the nest. Are we in danger of being overborne and overwhelmed? He who is mighty to save carries us as upon eagles' wings. Are we young, and feeble, and inexperienced? Then the young believer is fondled and caressed, encouraged and tended by a heavenly Father, even till the weak become like David. Or, is the furnace heated? Then the Son of God is with us there, so that only our bands are burned away, and the fiery trial of faith renders it more strong, by rendering it more pure. Or, do God's waves roll over us in quick succession? Then, as in the case of some shipwrecked men, every succeeding surge washes us higher up on the Rock than its predecessor left us. We feel safer and safer, because nearer and nearer to God, as trial presses upon trial.

Some of the finest illustrations of this growth in grace are found among the poor and the illiterate, for their poverty is often overruled to press them very near to God. In the absence of human learning, they devote the energies of their whole soul to the one thing needful, and their profiting often appears unto all men; they prosper like trees of the Lord's planting. Undisturbed by doubts or learned perplexities, they approach the Cross while others are debating whether they may venture near it. They are enjoying what God bestows, while others are questioning whether he means to bestow what he offers. They *do* the will of God, and then they know of the doctrine, whether it be

of God. By this process, they ripen so fast for glory—they grow so quickly in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that many sit at their feet to learn wisdom; for Christian sages and gifted divines have sometimes resorted to the cottages of the poor, to learn rather than to teach, or discover what wonders the Spirit of God can work in a soul, when the simple truth is received as its counsellor and guide. In religion, some men plant a withered branch, and wonder that it does not grow; but others are offshoots from the tree of life, and the beauties of holiness appear in rich abundance. Religion is not a separate and a detached thing. It pervades the thoughts and words and deeds of such believers, and men have reason to take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.

There are few more joyous exercises in a religious man's life than to trace the progress of his soul in grace. From the moment at which it was taken from the fearful pit and the miry clay, to that at which its feet were set upon a rock, and its goings established, how wide the difference—how marked the progress! From the time at which the soul first began to agitate the harassing question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" to that at which it could sing the believer's triumphal hymn, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"—how signal the transition! From that condition in which the slightest difficulty threatened disaster, to that at which the soul can exclaim, "Through Christ strengthening me I can do all things," how very conspicuous the change! The character of God has been seen in greater and ever-brightening glory. His love in Christ has been felt in still increasing power. The Spirit's hallowing energy is more habitually submitted to; and at last the little child, to whom an hour's neglect would be fatal, does not differ more from the maturity of manhood, than the soul of the believer, advancing to the stature of perfection, differs from its former self. To trace all the way

by which God has led us, to ponder on the different stages of our journey through the wilderness, and the events which befell us there, is one of the most refreshing of all the exercises in which a child of God can be engaged. The woes of widowhood, the pressure of poverty or disease, the voice of slander, the reproaches of ignorance, the assaults of malice, are all seen to have wrought together for our good, for they have driven us nearer and nearer to Christ; and whatever promotes that end, is fraught with mercy to the believer. The soul's progress has been likened—and the similitude is apt—to a vessel drifting across the ocean in a tempest. You see it plunging and labouring amid the waves: at one moment it disappears, and all seems lost, but in the next it is seen bravely breasting the waters, as if defying their anger; or, at one time it is the blackness of darkness which envelopes the ship, and at another the sun and the sky make her path serene and joyous. Amid all these vicissitudes, however, her career is still onward, and the haven of her home welcomes her at last. In like manner, to follow the perilous course of an immortal soul from death to life, then from conflict to conflict, from misery to joy, inspires a believer with a portion of that heroism which the Spirit employs to make us more than conquerors through Him who loved us. To see man, indeed, like Penelope, now weaving and anon unweaving the web of experience, does suggest doubts and fears; but grace is omnipotent, and that always causes the believer to triumph. That grace may be like a little spark upon a weltering ocean, and the wonder is, that it is not instantly quenched. But God covers it in the hollow of his hand, and it shoots up at length into a flame. The irrepressible vitality of grace surmounts every obstacle at last, and the soul guided by it arrives at that condition which is

> "Like the calm
> And placid aspect of the evening heavens."

In no respect is this growth more remarkable than as regards the believer's views of the life which now is.

In the morning of life, all seems gilded by hope, and teeming with promise. All our native tendencies, and much of our training, tend to throw an ideal beauty around the objects of earth, so that anticipations are formed which are destined never to be realised, and pleasures expected which are transmuted in the end into bitterness and pain. The Word of God warns us against all this, but we will not be warned; and one indication of the believer's spiritual progress is found in his growing perception of the insufficiency of earthly things, or the truth of the Bible's representations regarding the vanity and vexation of every perishing object. It is not gloomy misanthropy that is the result —it is not morose or morbid dissatisfaction. It is an intelligent and a truthful perception of the real condition of earth and all that relates to it. It is the apples of Sodom, known to be what they are. It is the grapes of Gomorrah, detected as producing only bitterness and disappointment. It is the fact ascertained, that no earthly thing can satisfy the soul of man—that as he was created by God, he must be guided to him again, before solid peace or satisfying joy can be the portion of his soul. Perhaps growth in grace may be all resolved into that one thing—at least it constitutes a large ingredient in that beauty of holiness which grace evolves and perfects in the soul.

Examples of this growth in grace meet us on every side. That of Nicodemus the rabbi is notable. At first he came to Jesus Christ by night. He had not boldness then to brave obloquy or scorn, but shrouded his incipient convictions under darkness, like things of which he felt ashamed. But the Teacher sent by God was training that ruler—he grew in grace, and anon we hear him pleading for the Redeemer among his unprincipled persecutors:—"Nicodemus saith unto them (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" He thus exposed himself to the taunts of the chief priests, who "answered and said

unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." But these very taunts helped to nerve and confirm the ruler; and at last we find him among the few who were faithful to the Saviour when malice and death had done their worst, and when his friends "all forsook him and fled." He helped to embalm the dead Redeemer: for "there came also Nicodemus, (who at the first came to Jesus by night,) and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight." He had grown in grace, especially the grace of courage; and he who began amid timidity and weakness, ended in being bold for the truth.

The case of another rabbi is yet more remarkable. In the history of Paul as a Christian, three stages have been noticed as indicating his vigorous though downward growth. In the year of our Lord fifty-nine, as some compute, Paul deemed himself "the least of the apostles." He remembered his former life, as a malignant persecutor, and could scarcely enrol himself in the apostolic band at all. But five years roll away, and Paul now announces himself "less than the least of all saints." He is no longer spoken of as an apostle, and even outrages the ordinary rules of language to find an expression strong enough to describe his condition. Yet, after the lapse of another year—that is, about the year sixty-five—the apostle finds a still lower bed, and has become "the chief of sinners." According to the Baptist's maxim, Christ was increasing, and Paul was decreasing—a sure token of spiritual vigour and heavenward progress.

The life of Dr Chalmers may furnish another instance of growth in grace. At one time he could exclaim, "The tenets of those whose gloomy and unenlarged minds are apt to imagine that the Author of Nature required the death of Jesus merely for the reparation of violated justice, are rejected by all free and rational inquirers;" that is, he and others denied the truth which lies at the basis of our hopes—that without the shedding

of blood there is no pardon. At length, however, his hostility to the truth was subdued, and his vision gradually expanded;—grace took the control of the mind; and many a prayer was offered, and many an earnest struggle put forth for an interest in that very atonement which he had once decried as the product of gloomy minds. His soul, like an ascending star, rose to its zenith at last; or, like the eagle, it soared ever nearer and nearer to the sun. Towards the close of his career, he leant with the weight of his whole soul, and the burden of all his sins, upon that very atonement; and resting there, he pled, "My God, condescend to make even this vile body a fit habitation for Thee, through the Spirit, that it may become a temple of the Holy Ghost, and that I may glorify the Lord with my body as well as with my soul and spirit, all of which are the Lord's." It is the mighty power of grace, appearing at first as a grain of mustard-seed, but shooting up into a tree, watered and made beautiful by Him whose emblem is the dew. It is the little brook which a child could overleap, flowing and expanding into a majestic river, till it could bear upon its bosom the navy of an empire. It is the Spirit of God working in his mighty power—abasing the proud, exalting the humble, and maturing grace till it be lost in glory.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Light in the Lord.

"The hand that gave the word supplies
The gracious light and heat:
His truths upon the nations rise,—
They rise, but never set.

Let everlasting thanks be Thine
For such a bright display
As makes a world of darkness shine
With beams of heavenly day.

My soul rejoices to pursue
The steps of Him I love,
Till glory break upon my view
In brighter worlds above."

OLNEY HYMN.

Light in the Lord.

Simple faith—Its power—Its mode of reasoning—The light eclipsed—The reason—Job—The Honourable Robert Boyle—His experience—The whole gospel meant to make man happy—John Howe—The waters of the Rhone, and the Lake of Geneva—An emblem.

THERE is some truth in the saying, that the religion of a people adapts itself to their habits, and even to the character of the country where they dwell. The gloomy recesses of the primeval forest, whence the moan of the tempest is often heard, will people a region with gods as gloomy. The neighbourhood of the hyena and the tiger, and constant struggles with them for the supremacy, will prompt a superstitious people to call in the aid of gods as bloody; and we are accordingly told, that in some places of Hindostan, a stone is set up near the jungles, and worshipped, as representing the lord of the tigers.

While it is thus with the gross superstitions which still weigh down the souls of myriads of the human race, a similar principle is sometimes seen at work as regards the truth of God—we mean, that it is often made to take on the hue of the individual mind through which it passes.

This is beautifully illustrated in the case of gentle and happy souls, when they come under the power of grace. While that power can transform the lion into the lamb, its operation is often very signal, and its effects very attractive in the case of those whose tem-

perament is bland, and genial, and full of natural benevolence. They become all sunshine and cheerfulness, so that they diffuse a light and joy all around them—they are living embodiments of the words, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Looking back on all the way by which God has led them, they can see that he has guided them by paths which they did not know; they therefore joy in God, and their hearts run over with happiness at the retrospect. While others are sitting in spiritual gloom, or at least are often subject to distressing alternations, such believers as we now describe are stablished, and strengthened, and made joyful in their King.

Nor is there any mystery in this. The faith of such believers is a simple faith, and as such it makes them strong. It should be carefully noticed whence their joy proceeds. Its fountain is the Lord. They live looking unto Jesus, and from him there flows into the soul, like light unto the eye from the sun, the very peace of God. They thoroughly understand the meaning of the words, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." They enter with all the heart into the saying, "Ye are complete in Christ." They see the wisdom of God embodied in the injunction, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." They perceive that Christ has made provision for entire and perfect freedom immediately from the condemnation of sin, gradually from its power, and from day to day from its pollution. They rest upon such texts as this, "By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified;" and resting there, they are kept in the very peace of God, while they see light in his light. In short, they take him at his word. They understand that redemption is "finished," and that it is offered to the ungodly; they close with it, and close with it again and again in that character; and the rising of the sun does not more certainly shed light and beauty over the landscape, than does that truth believed impart peace and joy to the believer. He is "accepted in the beloved." He is before God as Jesus

is, and what can he do but rejoice? A heathen fable tells that the temple of Diana was so brilliant, that an attendant stood always ready to warn those who entered to "take heed to their eyes:"—how much more dazzling the light which radiates from Him who "is light, and in whom is no darkness at all!"

Does such an one contemplate the attributes of God? He sees them all pledged to welcome him to glory. His very justice is enlisted on the believer's side—for it is justice satisfied—with its sword sheathed—its scales adjusted—and all done that the very holiness of Jehovah can demand. Or does such a believer contemplate the unchangeableness of God? That seems to frown upon many a sinner—and for escape, not a few would efface the truth that God is unchangeable; he appears to change and vacillate like the children of men. But he who is light in the Lord, sees in that unchangeableness the very foundation of his hope. The covenant—the pledged word—the oath—the essential immutability of Godhead, are all seen to favour such a believer. Or, next, does he think of the power of God? That is regarded by a guilty conscience as hostile power, and ready to destroy. But when we are light in the Lord, it is power to deliver and uphold. Who was it that made the worlds? By what did he make them? Or who is it that upholds—and how does he uphold them? It is God the Saviour, by the word of his power. Now, that very word which laid the foundations of the earth, and hung the firmament with glory, is the word on which the believer's hope depends. He trusts in the faithful Word of God, and trusting to that, a thousand storms beat, and a thousand waves break over him in vain. There is glory even in the midst of tribulation—faith sees the brightness of the Father's glory, when sense may be mourning, and weeping, and despairing, as if God had forgotten to be gracious. "My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth," becomes the glad exclamation of the reposing soul.

This makes it manifest that there is a close connection between faith and a right experience in the believer's soul. Many desire to have experience or peace and joy *before* believing,—in other words, they would believe if they had peace and joy. Now, all may see that this is not faith—on the contrary, it is denying or reversing the Word of God. It is placing the pyramid upon its apex instead of its base, or planting a tree with its branches in the earth, to expect experience or happiness apart from receiving the Saviour. Man became wretched by denying God's truth. If we are ever to be restored to happiness, it must be by believing that truth again; and we accordingly see that the most joyous soul is the most believing soul—our enjoyment in religion is just proportioned to our faith. Indeed, to all who understand the laws of the spiritual kingdom, true joy, without faith in the word of the Holy One, is as impossible as vegetation without sunshine, or harvest without a seed-time. All begins in living, simple faith in the Word of God; and from that, as the root, there will spring, in rich abundance, the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The soul is then put in possession of all that is comprehended in the prayer, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

But it often happens that this serenity is clouded, and some who had long enjoyed it, have been left to walk in darkness. Job, for example, had reason to say, "O that I were as in months past, and in the days when God preserved me!" He was overwhelmed with calamity when he spoke these words, and that calamity was deepened by the contrast between the present and the past. Amid his darkness, he thought of the time "when the candle of the Lord shined upon his head, and when by his light he walked through darkness." The experience of the past added poignancy to the sorrow of the present; and how was Job delivered? How did he learn to unsay his language, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me?" By the very same process

as that by which he had become light in the Lord at first—that is, by looking to him as his Redeemer, and learning to exclaim, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." It was first the believing look, and then the attitude of one who repented in dust and ashes, which led to light and joy again. Job not merely read the promises; he believed them. He not merely knew that there was a day's-man between God and him—he fled to that only Mediator; and then, instead of "being wearied with the greatness of the way," he could say, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, ... then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." It is the believer's own deceitful heart, or his own wayward hand, that obscures the light which the Lord would shed. It is his want of spiritual discernment which often makes him walk so gloomily, or tread as if he stood upon a new-filled grave. Were the eye habitually fixed upon the Sun of righteousness, it would be in the spiritual as in the physical world—above the region of vapours, and clouds, and tempests, a sphere would be known and dwelt in where the sunshine of Heaven's favour would be perpetual without variableness, and bright without a shadow.

Few knew more of the believer's serenity and joy than the Honourable Robert Boyle.* His philosophic spirit had searched deep into the essentials of religion; and it is manifest that they had obtained, to a large extent, the control of his heart and soul. Yet even he has recorded "that never did those fleeting clouds (which interfere between the sun and the soul) cease now and then to darken the clearest serenity of his quiet." Calm and meditative as he was, they came unasked, and often would not remove when commanded—and all that happened in spite of the firm conviction, that the Father of lights would ever shine upon the children of the day.

* See his work on Seraphic Love, of which it has been said, "There is scarcely any thing more poetical in Jeremy Taylor, or more logical in Isaac Barrow."

"The withdrawn sense of his favour," Boyle tells us was restored by the God of mercy—but why was it withdrawn? Because the believer had slipt from the rock to the sand—from the unchanging word of God's eternal truth to the feelings or the fancies of men. Light is sown for us—but it is light in the Lord, and only in him can we see it.

It is beautiful exceedingly to see how rich and ample is the provision which is made in the Word of God for supplanting the sorrows of man by the joys of religion. One design which the Redeemer kept in view was, that the joy of his people might be full; and all his revelations have that for their tendency. As the midnight sky is all sparkling with stars, the Word of God shines with a thousand texts which tell of a joy like that which reigns in heaven—a peace like that which pervades the bosom of Godhead. Why need any of us be sad, when we read, "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day?" Why need any of us droop, and wither, and despond, when it is written, "They shall flourish like the palm tree; they shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon?" Why should any feel fettered or enslaved, when we read of "the glorious liberty of the sons of God?" Why need we feel oppressed or poor, when God is "the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever?" Or, finally, why need we shrink and tremble even when the last enemy approaches, seeing that we are taught to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth?" It is true that while we are here below, the believer's very joys are strangely linked to sorrow. After referring to joys which he had experienced, "far surpassing the most expressive words his thoughts could suggest," John Howe, the most serene in temperament of all the puritans, wrote on the blank leaf of his Bible, "I experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melting of heart, tears gushing out of mine eyes for joy, that God should shed abroad his love abundantly through the hearts of men, and that for this very purpose mine own heart should be so signally honoured by the Holy Spirit." And

Paul, in the same spirit, speaks of being "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." He was light in the Lord, then, and none but Paul himself could shade or eclipse that light. Even his "forty stripes save one," only ministered to his greater joy on his way to glory, honour, and immortality.

When the waters of the Rhone fall into the lake of Geneva, they are turbid and impure beyond what rivers commonly are; and, for a considerable space, they render the lake muddy like themselves. But ere they reach Geneva, they are filtered into beautiful transparency, and blue, like the bright sky above them. Now, that physical fact is an emblem of a spiritual result. Man's whole soul, which is turbid and defiled by nature, may be so purified in the fountain of life, the gospel, that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost may become his new birthright; and we are not light in the Lord, as we ought to be, when that joy is not ours.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Perfect Peace.

"No drop remains of all the curse,
For wretches who deserved the whole;
No arrows dipt in wrath to pierce
The guilty but returning soul.

Peace by such means so dearly bought,
What rebel could have hoped to see?
Peace by his injured Sovereign wrought,—
His Sovereign fastened to a tree!"

OLNEY HYMN.

Perfect Peace.

The scriptural views of peace—Peace with conscience—The peace which the Spirit produces—Rom. viii. 16 explained—The peace of progress—Peace flowing from Christ's finished work—From communion with God—From his law—The Sabbath—Sir Matthew Hale—Rev. C. Simeon—An illustration.

"GREAT peace have they who love God's law." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." "My peace I give unto thee." "The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ our Lord."—These appear to be the gradations of peace provided for believers by the God of the gospel; and so ample is the arrangement for restoring happiness to man, that we need not scruple to assert, that there is something radically and essentially defective in our religion, when it does not bring some measure of peace into the soul. Can I be a subject of the Prince of Peace, and yet remain troubled and tossed as if I must one day perish? Can I be justified freely by the righteousness of Christ, and yet walk in bonds as if I were walking to judgment? Can my conscience be cleansed from dead works, while yet I feel and act as if my conscience were still condemning, and still defiled? Can my heart be a temple of the Holy Ghost, the commissioned Comforter of the soul of man, while comfort is a stranger to my bosom, while sorrow is unsoothed, and trouble, not joy, my daily portion? The truth as it is in Jesus has surely not been

allowed its legitimate influence in the mind, if it have not spread throughout the conscience and the heart that purity, and peace, and holy joy which the Man of Sorrows purchased for his people by his tears, his agonies, and death.

Contemplate for a little, the peace of the believer in its elements and its results.

It is peace with conscience. The vicegerent of God is not merely silenced—it is satisfied. All its claims are responded to—it is magnified and made honourable in the same way as the law of God was magnified. And more than this, it is made pure through the blood of sprinkling. Snow-water was unavailing—and every human appliance only rendered the fruitlessness of human expedients more apparent; but the divine remedy works divine effects, and the conscience is cleansed from dead works that it may serve the living God. Hence the great peace of him who is washed, and justified, and sanctified. As sin wraps up misery in it, purity wraps up joy, and there is thus diffused through the soul which has fled to the fountain opened for sin, a serenity and a peace with which the world cannot intermeddle. The confusion which sin occasioned is hushed. The fear which haunts the polluted soul is turned into holy confidence or hope—in short, the blessedness of the man whose sin is forgiven becomes the portion of the believer.

But after all, this is only the dawn of peace; it is preparatory to something more gladdening still. It is to be lamented, that so many who name the name of Jesus are borne down by doubts, and fears, and forebodings. Their harps are always hanging on the willows of Babylon. They bring an evil report upon the truth, and while they hang down the head like a bulrush, they may deter those from entering the kingdom who would. But still there are some who are kept in perfect peace. The joy of the Lord is their strength. They can at least approximate to the condition of those who rejoice in the Lord alway. They are compassed

about with songs of deliverance. They are joyful in the house of their pilgrimage, and diffuse a serenity—they seem to breathe of heaven, wherever they appear. It was the Saviour's recorded purpose, we have seen, that the joy of his people might be full. Nay, his joy was to remain in them—the Redeemer's own joy—and some at least approximate to that blissful state. It is not a pining, languid faith; it is not a halting and hesitating reception of the offered salvation; it is not objecting, and doubting, and starting difficulties, which can bring this blessedness to the heart of man; but a prompt acceptance of what God offers, and then a grateful enjoyment of what God bestows.

And oh, with how full a tide may this peace flow into the soul, when we remember that the Spirit of God is its author! It is joy in the Holy Ghost. If we be filled with joy and peace in believing, it is through his power; and this is one explanation of the difference which appears in the experience of the children of God. Some yield to all the movements of the Spirit, and are thus conducted along the paths which are pleasantness and peace; but others grieve him, if not by obvious sin, at least by gloomy despondency, and doubt; and hence, the darkness gathers depth, or fear lays a heavier weight upon the soul. It is when we are enabled to follow where the Spirit leads, that we are guided at once into all truth and all blessedness, according to the Word of God. To live and to walk in the Spirit is the divine prescription for delighting in the abundance of peace.

At this point we may be able, perhaps, to explain a passage in the Word of God which bears directly on the peace, and the joy, and the blessedness of his people. In one place,* Paul speaks of some with whose spirit the Spirit of God bears witness that they are the children of God—and how is this witness borne? Is it by bringing from heaven above some new or personal revelation to the believer, that he is a child of God—some disclosure by voice or inexplicable impression that

* Rom. viii. 16.

eternal glory is to be his? We apprehend, that to assert such a doctrine were to suppose an addition to God's perfect revelations; but the apostle's words convey no such meaning. They tell us clearly that God's Spirit bears witness with ours, but it is through means of the written Word. It is by applying the truth of God to the conscience, the heart, the soul, and enabling us to see certain results accomplished there. It is by helping us to discover how lineament after lineament is traced upon the heart, and brought out in the life according to the inspired standard—it is by that process, and not by any new revelation direct from the bosom of Jehovah to the individual inquirer, that that testimony is borne. The fleshly tablet of the heart becomes, in some degree, a transcript of the Word of God —a transcript, not of the letter or the word alone, but of the spirit, the truth in the power and the love of it —and that felt power, that constraining love, enables the inquirer to conclude that, having the lineaments of the Christian family here, he may humbly hope for the Christian heritage hereafter—he is a joint-heir with Christ. There is, beyond all question, a direct power put forth on the soul of man by the witness-bearing Spirit. Nay, that Spirit actually dwells in the soul of the believer; but it is not by a new revelation—it is through the written Word that he sways and sanctifies; and, illumined from on high, the soul of man thus becomes radiant with a portion of heaven's own light.

Now, this produces great peace and joy to the believer. It is like seeing his name in the Lamb's book of life. It is an earnest of the purchased possession in the seal of the Spirit. It is the conviction which taught Paul to exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" and to add—"Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In tracing his past career, does the believer recall the conviction that he is making some progress in the divine life? While he cannot but note his shortcomings, and

deeply deplore them, does he yet humbly hope that he is making head against them—that by God's grace he is now farther advanced in the way to Zion than he was a year or years ago? That also ministers to his peace—he is encouraged to stay himself more and more upon his God. We say, to stay himself upon his God, and not upon his progress; but when he gives God the glory of the latter, it furnishes a new source of blessedness. "Hitherto the Lord has helped," is the fact then ascertained, and "Henceforth the Lord will provide," becomes the deduction warrantably drawn. Jehovah-jireh, and Jehovah-nissi, thus stand closely related in the believer's experience. There may be troubles, there may even be crosses which threaten to crush—death may rifle away the objects of affection, or it may be felt to be stealthily creeping over our own frail frames. But if these things are blessed, as they often are, to give greater acuteness to the spiritual vision, and to bring out some additional traits of resemblance to the Man of Sorrows, these very crosses become the handmaidens of our joy—we begin to understand what it is to glory even in tribulation.

"There is a radiance in their eye,
A smile upon their wasted cheek,
That seems to tell of glory nigh,
In language that no tongue can speak."

But we should not fail to observe, that much of the peace which the believer enjoys originates in his perception of the full, and finished, and perfect salvation which is presented in the gospel. This glorious conception of the divine mind is rarely comprehended by the children of men in all its unspeakable magnificence. Salvation for the virtuous, salvation for the penitent, salvation for the reformed,—all can understand, because it involves the notion of merit, so congenial to man according to his primal constitution. But salvation for the ungodly—for the chief of sinners—for those who are aliens from God—or for those who are dead in trespasses and sin, men cannot comprehend. And if that salvation be not merely for the ungodly, and the

chief of sinners, but for them *now*—for them *as they are*—for them so as to render even them complete for justification—according to the words, "Ye are complete in Christ;" then the mystery is increased, and that gospel men cannot understand, just as they cannot say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Yet, true as that is, it is that very truth which constitutes no small measure of the joy and the blessedness of the believer's heart. He is sick, but he does not need to erect an asylum for himself—there is one erected already, and he has only to enter and be healed. He is condemned, but he does not need, by his own doings, to cancel the condemnation; nay, he could only render it more certain; all he has to do, according to the gospel, is to *come*, to *look*, to Christ, and in him there is no condemnation. The sinner is weak, but in the Lord he has righteousness and strength. He needs an advocate with the Father—Christ supplies what he needs. In brief, all things are ready, when the sinner, as a sinner, will be saved upon Jehovah's terms, and in Jehovah's way. When the eye of his faith rests supremely on the high priest in the Holy of Holies, all that he has done, and all that he is doing, become like fountains of peace, and the believer can then rejoice more than other men when their corn and wine do most abound.

And that, we repeat, constitutes a large ingredient in the perfect peace of the believer. Being justified by faith, we have peace—even peace with God. Being made the righteousness of God in Christ, we are accepted in the beloved, and he then becomes our peace. The handwriting of ordinance is now blotted out; Christ nailed it to his cross. All that is free—all is full—all is immediate—this is the accepted time; and over that wondrous product of wisdom, power, and love divine, the soul may rejoice with a portion of the joy which is unspeakable.

Communion with God, and a sense of his favour, constitute another large element in the peace of a child of God—a peace which is perfect in kind, though ever

growing in degree. What is the meaning of that deep wail which we hear ascending from all the families of men? Why does humanity send up to the ear of its God one long and universal bleat? How can we interpret that groaning and travailing together in pain to which the whole creation is subject? Man has lost his God. "They have taken away my God! and what have I left?"—that is the meaning of the universal wo. Man does not understand his misery. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; and the reason is found in the fact, that sin has thrown a great gulf, or occasioned a disruption, between our God and us. But redemption bridges over the gulf; in the Redeemer we recover our God, we again acquaint ourselves with him, and so are at peace. The Saviour is appointed to be the meeting-place between the Holy One and the sinful. On the one hand, he washes away defilement; on the other, he satisfies justice—he magnifies law, and hence the soul again walks with its God, so as to know that he is in very deed the God of peace. There may still be a cross to carry; but it is gloried in, by the grace which God ministers. There may still be woes; but even tribulation ministers to our joy, for it is blessed to fit us for the city of our God. "Happy, then, is the man whom the Lord correcteth." "We count them happy who endure." "We count it all joy when we fall into divers trials," for fellowship with Christ in his sufferings is a prelude to everlasting fellowship in his glory.

Another source of peace to the believer is found in the law of the Lord. To speak of it as producing aught akin to peace or joy, may seem as strange to some as it would have been to hear Belshazzar tell that the handwriting on the wall, which announced his doom, was a source of joy to him. Many find in the law only a hard taskmaster, whom they try in self-righteous drudgery to please, but never can succeed. Others behold in it only a stern, repulsive jailor; or worse, a remorseless executioner—debarring them from enjoy-

ment by terror, or scaring them by the urgent fear of death. As long as man is self-righteous, the law must either be mutilated, and brought down to the sinner's level, or that sinner will be joyless, like a criminal condemned. But when we understand that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and that he has magnified the law and made it honourable, then joy in its study, and peace from its untarnishable holiness, begin to flow into the soul. God is seen to be in it—nay, it is the very transcript of his own celestial purity—and the soul, therefore, rejoices in that law as another means at once of acquainting itself with God, and of preparing to be for ever with him, when the Holy Spirit is our guide.

No better illustration of this can be given than the feelings and convictions of a child of God regarding the Christian Sabbath. Some would discard its observance from the list of moral obligations, and would consecrate no set portion of their time to the service of God, or preparation for eternity. Others allege the absence of positive enactment for the holy institution, and ask the Saviour's authority for its observance. They will keep it according to a bond—the *heart* can discover no warrant for the sacred rest. But the child of God acts on different principles, and arrives at a different conclusion. To him the Sabbath is a delight; it is the holy of the Lord and honourable. He observes it, not because he is compelled, but because he rejoices to do so. His soul feels its freedom more than ever when it is in the Spirit on the Lord's-day. Its exercises tend so happily to restore the tone of the soul, to give reality to spiritual things, and lift it above the influences of earth and the earthly, that the very peace which it brings would allure the believer to keep the fourth commandment, though he were free from all external authority and constraint. A Sabbatic frame of mind, when the world is shut out, and the things of eternity brought nigh, is a source of purest joy even in the wilderness, and may be the most signal of all the means

which the Spirit of God employs to prepare us for the heavenly Canaan—the everlasting Sabbath which remains for the people of God.

"Sir Matthew Hale," says Bishop Burnet, "had a generous and noble idea of God in his mind; and this he found above all other considerations to preserve his quiet. And, indeed, that was so well established in him, that no accidents, how sudden soever, were observed to discompose him—of which an eminent man of the legal profession gave me this instance: In the year 1666, an opinion ran through the nation that the end of the world would come that year. This, whether set on by astrologers, or advanced by those who thought it might have some relation to the number of the beast in the Revelations, or promoted by men of ill designs to disturb the public peace, had spread mightily among the people. Judge Hale going that year the western circuit, it happened that, as he was on the bench at the assizes, a most terrible storm fell out very unexpectedly, accompanied with such flashes of lightning and claps of thunder, that the like will hardly fall out in an age; upon which a whisper or rumour ran through the crowd, 'that now was the end of the world, and the day of judgment to begin.' At this there followed a general consternation in the assembly, and all men forgot the business they were met about, and betook themselves to their prayers. This, added to the horror raised by the storm, looked very dismal; insomuch that my author, a man of no ordinary resolution and firmness of mind, confessed it made a great impression on himself. But he told me that he did observe the Judge was not a whit affected, and was going on with the business of the court in his ordinary manner; from which he made this conclusion, 'That his thoughts were so well fixed, that he believed if the world had been really to end, it would have given him no considerable disturbance.'"

Few of the followers of the Lamb ever enjoyed more spiritual serenity than the Rev. Charles Simeon. It was in the year 1779 that he first submitted to the

truth in its power; and he has carefully noted that he "obtained perfect peace on Easter-day of that year." From that period, the peace of God reigned in his mind, not with equal supremacy at all times, but so as to enable him to say, that to be "kept in perfect peace" was his great desire, "and that mercy God richly vouchsafed unto him." "When I look to him," he said, as his end drew nigh, "I see nothing but *faithfulness*, and *immutability*, and *truth*; and I have not a doubt or a fear but the sweetest peace—I CANNOT HAVE MORE PEACE." As his close drew nearer still, he was enabled to say: "I shall see Him whom having not seen I love, in whom though now I see him not, yet believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Of the reality of this I am as sure as if I were there this moment." He trusted in God, and was not put to shame. In the exercise of a simple faith, he took the Word of God for his rock, and he dwelt safely thereon. Had he sought to rest upon his own experience, it would have been, as he has recorded,* like looking at the sun through the medium of the waters—in which case the sun would have appeared to move as the waters undulated. But resting on the unchanging Word of the eternal God, he could delight himself in the abundance of peace, even at the time when the grasshopper was felt to be a burden, and when the silver cord was about to be loosed, and the golden bowl to be broken, and the wheel broken at the cistern, and the pitcher at the fountain. "I never saw till I was blind," said a blind man to Mr Simeon; "nor did I ever know contentment when I had my eyesight, as I do now that I have lost it. I can truly affirm, though few know how to credit me, that I would on no account change my present situation and circumstances with any that I ever enjoyed before I was blind." Such is that peace which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit—the new birthright of all who are the subjects of the Prince of Peace.

These are some of the elements of the perfect peace in which a believer may live. Peace with conscience—

* Life, second edition, p. 732.

such peace as the Spirit of grace supplies—the peace which a healthy and progressive godliness ministers—the peace which flows from the clear perception of Christ's finished work—his salvation provided for the chief of sinners, and similar sources; and now the question arises, How may that peace be mine? *By receiving and resting upon Christ.* Peace, even perfect peace, is not to be the object of our direct pursuit, or pursuit for its own sake. It is to be sought in Christ; and when we have received *him*, then *in him* we have righteousness and peace—we have all that Jehovah can bestow upon sinners; for we have Him for our portion in whom all the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells. It is this that makes trial light. It is this that enables the believer to see how holy, just, and good, are all the dealings of Jehovah with his people. It is this that imparts a calm joy to the soul, and which has made it proof against the persecutor's rack or blazing pile. There is one man known to history, and long illustrious among his fellow-men, who in his own meditations had reached the conviction that there was a new world far across the sea, and no disappointment or vexing delay could expel that conviction from his earnest mind. Neither the frowns nor the neglect of monarchs, neither hope deferred, nor the terrors of the deep, nor mutiny, nor tempest, nor death, could turn Columbus from his resolute purpose. On he pressed, in spite of them all—serene amid the tempest—full of hope when all around seemed to tell only of despair; and he stood at last on the shores of a lovely island in the ocean, the discoverer of lands whose discovery has changed the history of the world. Now, that is an illustration of the believer's peace. It keeps him calm and unruffled amid a hundred perplexities, and follows him at last to the home where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit.

"Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
From strife and tumult far;
From scenes where Satan wages still
His most successful war.

The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by thy sweet bounty made
For those who follow thee.

There, if thy Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
Oh, with what peace, and joy, and love,
She communes with her God!"

COWPER.

The Ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit.

A description—Examples—Rev. James Martin—Dr. Malan—Socinianism—Case of a soul edified in spite of the errors of that system—M. B——.—A caution—Characteristics of the meek and quiet—Miss J—— H——.—Her blindness—Her spiritual attainments—Characteristics of different ministers in their bearing on the divine life—Edward Bickersteth—Jonathan Edwards—Mrs. Ann Johnstone—A contrast.

In contemplating the various aspects in which religion in its power is presented to the mind, we are sometimes permitted to behold a case in which gentleness and meekness wield an influence which even the courageous Christian does not always possess. Whether it be the result of natural constitution, or of more than ordinary grace ministered by the sovereign Spirit, we meet with some who are invested with the special attractions, which cannot be better described than as "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." As that is in the sight of God of great price, it is often in the eyes of man of singular beauty and attractive power. Even the ruthless and the profane have been awed into submission by its gentle but resistless sway—let us therefore contemplate some of its aspects as they are presented in some individual cases.

We premise by remarking, that believers of the class to which we now refer, are often little disposed, nay decidedly averse, to contend for their religious opinions. They hold them with unswerving tenacity, and no power can modify their convictions. There may be no boisterous defence of the truth, or no clamorous competition for publicity in upholding it—but firmly and immovably,

like men taught by God, do they hold fast their persuasions. It is recorded of the late Rev. James Martin—an eminent example of the graces now referred to—that when any sentiment was uttered in his hearing, in which he could not coincide, he entered into no wordy contention on the subject—from that he always recoiled—but in a sentence or two, with equal suavity and firmness, he indicated his opinion. It was the alternative of a gentle and a gracious nature seeking to escape from the position of seeming to approve of what it really condemned; and this is an exact exhibition of the bearing of the meek and quiet spirit.* It cannot contend; but it can suffer, if need be: it may be silenced; but its resolution is not changed, and the serenity of a perfect conviction keeps it unmoved amid incidents which would disturb and agitate less collected spirits.

This peculiar aspect of the spiritual life often depends on the character of the believer's conversion—perhaps we should go farther back, and say that it depends on his original mental constitution, which is rectified, but not necessarily revolutionized, when the power of the Spirit is first felt and submitted to by man. And a remarkable illustration of this is found in the case of Dr Malan. Few have done more for the revival of truth—few have been more honoured in winning souls, and few have indicated such firmness, supporting blandness, and benignity of character, as the long persecuted pastor of the Pré Beni. Now, in describing his own earliest experience as a Christian, Malan has recorded "that the Lord Jesus awakened him as a mother does a sleeping babe, with a kiss."† All was gentleness in his soul. It was feeling, and not conscience—it was the gospel, and not the law—it was grace, and not justice, which dealt with that young disciple. As he awoke from the delusions of nature, he entered at once into a region where love presided; and from that hour to this, religion has been with him mainly a thing of

* See Martin's Life prefixed to his Sermons, p. 42.
† See Cheever's Wanderings of the River of Life, p. 179.

smiles and joy—not so much faith as vision—not so much hope as fruition—not so much struggling and contending, at least as concerns his own soul, as actually enjoying the blessedness of that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The peculiar spiritual characteristics to which we now advert, have been known to appear in very singular circumstances, and to rise superior to much that might seem likely to crush or extirpate them. A believer in Jesus waited on the ministry of a pastor who was virtually a Socinian. He professedly belonged, indeed, to a section of the Christian church whose creed was far different from that form of religion which mainly consists in denying the divinity of Jehovah our Righteousness. But covertly he rejected or mutilated, as Socinianism does, those portions of the Word of God which tell of "God with us," and "the Word which was God," and "God manifest in the flesh." His sermons were, of course, cold, and not more than moral. There was nothing there to meet the cravings of man's responsible nature, when alive to that responsibility. Nay, rather, they tended to stifle all conviction, to accommodate God's law to man's convenience, while they fed his pride by recognising his power to work for heaven, and win it by his virtues, or, at least, by his penitence and reformation. Yet, under such a ministry, one soul at least found Jesus to be indeed and in truth the Christ of God, the Saviour of the sons of men, God with us, and God manifest in the flesh. It was Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, however others might be employed. It was the Greeks saying to the disciples, "We would see Jesus." It was a meek and quiet spirit by nature; and when the grace of God visited it, no perversions of man could turn it from the simple Word. There might be no angry contention, no harsh or censorious crimination; but neither was there any imbibing of poison, and calling it food. The germs of divine truth, which even Socinianism can neither kill nor efface, when once lodged in the mind, spread and ramified under the

influence of Him who is as the dew to Israel, till the beauties of holiness, in no ordinary degree, adorned the soul. It was a dangerous, and might have been a fatal experiment: it could be vindicated only by the fact, that no otner ministry was accessible. But the sovereign Spirit overruled it for good, and faith in God was all the simpler in M—— B——, because man could not be trusted; that Spirit was more honoured on account of man's shortcomings, and He took of the things of Christ, and showed them in large abundance to the meek and quiet spirit. The Word of truth was more closely consulted, and more implicitly obeyed; and in God's good time, his child was led to partake of a more bounteous provision; but not till He had displayed his sovereignty and marvellous loving-kindness, in bringing one from darkness to light, in a sphere where death might have been dreaded, instead of life being made stronger and more buoyant.

We remark, as we pass along, that this is full of consolation to all who love the souls of men. Wherever God has his hidden ones, he will supply the hidden manna. Even in Sardis, he will keep at least a few from defiling their garments with the world. If he in his providence place his children in that position—we repeat it, if he in his providence place his children there, he will send them their portion in due season, and some Pharaoh will be employed to supply what some Benjamin requires: but to presume that he will do so when we enter such scenes after warning and against light, is no mark of a meek and quiet spirit; it is blindly to rush upon certain death. But gently to recline on God, wherever he has placed us, and ask the unction of the Holy One, that he may become the glorifier of Jesus, is the appointed path for adding to our faith all the graces which should adorn the believer's life on earth.

Nothing is more characteristic of the meek and quiet believer, than his ready disposition to receive the truth of God. Some who, prior to their conversion, struggled

hard against that truth, and refused to submit to its power, subsequent to that great revolution have become simple, docile, and perfectly child-like in their treatment of the Word. "Do as thou hast said," is their frequent prayer. "What wouldst thou have me to do?" is their frequent question. "What saith the Lord?" is the inquiry which, when it is adjusted, settles all disputes, and terminates all controversy. They approach the Word somewhat in the spirit of the disciples who stood beside the Saviour's cross, attracted by a power which they could not withstand, to whatever dangers it might lead; and in that spirit the meek and the gentle believer often outstrips, in spiritual attainments, those who seem to be of larger grasp and wider range of mind. The truth, we know, is revealed to babes, even while it is hidden from the wise and the prudent. The character of a little child is the essential preliminary to entering the kingdom; but those who enter as babes, soon grow up to the fulness of the stature of perfect men in Christ.

But one of the most conspicuous examples of that peculiar grace which we are now describing, appeared in the case of Miss J—— H——. For four-and-twenty years of her life, she had been blind, and could enter at once into the truth and the poetry of Milton's mournful words:—

> "I feel thy sovran, vital lamp; but thou
> Revisit'st not these eyes that roll in vain
> To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn,
> So thick a drop serene hath quenched their orbs,
> Or dim suffusion veil'd."

> "Day, or the sweet approach of even, or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine,"

were all unknown to her, but she could add,—

> "So much the rather, thou Celestial Light,
> Shine inwards, and the mind, through all her powers,
> Irradiate."

And it was irradiated. Scarcely ever could a case occur in which the spiritual vision was more clear or far-seeing. The meaning of Scripture was penetrated with

a force which brought up from its depths many a precious pearl, or many a hallowing lesson. Christians were often refreshed and made glad by communion with that spirit; for the chamber where it seemed to dwell in darkness and alone, was frequently a meeting-place between the soul and God. Not merely did the tried one submit without a murmur—not merely was there patience and resignation; in many cases these are only negative, and may be cold—but in her case there was peace and joy; in short, some of the richest fruits of the Spirit might be gathered from that devout and tranquil sufferer, ornamented as she was by a meek and quiet spirit. The truth, early deposited in the heart, and often pondered and prayed over, kept the lamp of divine light constantly burning; and though she sat in darkness to the eye of man, she was all radiant in the beauty of holiness, in the sight of Him who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. Many gathered rich fruits there, and were glad.

In contemplating this diversity of the Christian character, in which gentle acquiescence in the divine will, and love to the divine Word, are the prominent peculiarities, the remark is suggested that much depends upon the peculiar character of the ministry under which the soul is converted. A ministry in which the law's requirements are made very prominent, as in the case of Dr Love, at one period of his life, will lead to one exhibition of the divine life; a ministry in which the love of God in Christ is made the prominent topic, will lead to another; and between these two, we find countless varieties and shades, all producing as many diversities of Christian experience. In some cases, the gospel is so obscurely or faintly presented, that the worshipper must proceed, somewhat as the devout Jew had to do, to discover truth and arrive at salvation through means of types, and shadows, and symbols. In other cases, the full blaze of light is poured upon the worshipper's soul, from a heart charged with love, and sanctified knowledge, and high aims at the glory of God in the salva-

tion of man. All these, then, must lead to great diversities in the Christian life; and it is when a meek and quiet spirit meets with a ministry of life, and simplicity, and vigour, that it shoots up like the palm tree, or like willows by the water-courses.

Take, as an instance, the ministry of Edward Bickersteth. He held some peculiarities in doctrine, which might impede the progress of some more vigorous minds; but the grand distinction of his ministry was its simplicity, its exquisite adaptation to meet the desires of the meek and quiet spirit. Truth was presented in its most unctional and attractive forms. In his hands, doctrines which are often made repulsive by bolder and more powerful minds, were made pleasing and full of comfort. We have known him, for example, surmount the difficulty of a scrupulous inquirer on the subject of election, where much more able advocates had failed to satisfy or convince. The character of Bickersteth's own mind was that of transparent simplicity; and the simple attractiveness which he threw around truth, decorated by him, not in the meretricious ornaments which man's taste suggests, but pure and heavenly as it came from God, gave to his ministry a character and a tone which carried many forward in that grace which is strong because it is simple, meek, and quiet.

But, in spiritual things as elsewhere, extremes often lie close together. The transition from Edward Bickersteth to Jonathan Edwards is very great, and yet they partook of the same spirit—they were members of the one great family; and the American, as well as the English divine, was characterised by great meekness and quietness of soul. When Edwards was virtually ejected by an ungrateful people, for whom, perhaps, his ministry was too holy, and heavenly, and pure, his own account of his condition is at once tenderly touching, and sublime in its composed, its meek and quiet confidence in God. "I desire your prayers," he wrote to a Christian brother, "that I may take a suitable notice of the frowns of Heaven on me and this people, in bringing to

pass such a separation between us, and that these troubles may be sanctified to me—that God would overrule this event for his own glory (which, doubtless, many adversaries will rejoice and triumph in)—that God would open a door for my future usefulness, and provide for me and my numerous family, and take a fatherly care of us in our present unsettled, uncertain circumstances —being cast on the wide world." There is no passion here, no recrimination, and not a single murmur amid such thickening troubles. All is meek and quiet, like one who had learned to behave as a weaned child. The sufferer cast himself, and all who were dear to him, on the providence of a Father in heaven, and then reposed in peace. Calm and serene in his temperament by nature, there was a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, in his religion, which transcended that of other men, as much as he soared above them in his mental power. "Sometimes," he writes, "only mentioning a single word caused my heart to burn within me, or only seeing the name of Christ, or the name of an attribute of God. And God has appeared glorious to me on account of the Trinity." "Once," he adds, "as I rode out into the woods for my health, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine meditation, I had a view, that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God as Mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure, and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension." So meek and listening was his spirit, that a single clause of the Word riveted the whole soul of Edwards—nay, grand as it was, it bowed to the earth in the docility of a gentle child before a single word; and, in return for that docility, joy after joy was poured into his cup. "The soul of a true Christian," he said, "appears like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the year—low and humble on the ground—opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory—rejoicing, as it were, in a calm rapture—diffusing around a sweet fra-

grancy—standing peacefully and lovingly in the midst of other flowers round about, all in like manner opening their bosoms to drink in the light of the sun." Now, this is poetry as well as devotion—it is poetry placing its wreathes on the brow of the world's greatest theologian, and making theology a hymn.

Another exemplification of this beautiful combination of meekness and quietness is found, in a far different sphere, in the life of Mrs Ann Johnstone. Firm upon principle, but yielding in all besides, this Christian was the spiritual friend of thousands, and the spiritual benefactress of not a few; and as we trace her through her works of faith and her labours of love, we at once discover that one secret of her ascendency for good was found in the meekness and gentleness of her soul. In her case, the Scripture was pre-eminently true: "The work of righteousness is peace, and the effects of it quietness and assurance for ever;" and as she was thus meek and quiet, according to her Lord's requirements, she inherited the earth according to his promise—that is, she was blessed in her soul above what can easily be told—clusters from Eshcol often cheered and refreshed her. "Frequently, from five o'clock in the morning until a late hour at night, the soul was so filled with believing views of the blessed Jesus, as a King and a Priest upon his throne for ever, that scarcely a wandering thought would be suffered to obtrude or draw away the mind; and sometimes, in secret prayer and meditation, the divine character and perfections, in the scheme of apostate man's redemption by a crucified Redeemer, the love of Christ, the promises of the covenant, and the joys and glories of heaven, were exhibited by the Spirit with such a vividness of spiritual perception, as to be too bright for mortal eyes to behold; and, as the tide of light, life, and love continued to flow into the soul, she was made to cry out, like the godly John Welsh, 'Hold, Lord! thy weak vessel can contain no more.'"* Again:—"Her sister, who generally accom-

* See Memoirs of the late Mrs Ann Johnstone, p. 9.

panied her to those wells of spiritual refreshment (the Lord's table), and who also thirsted eagerly after communion with God in his ordinances, was so struck with Mrs Johnstone's progress in grace, that she often said she wondered that her sister was so long out of heaven, and that it must be for the good of others that she was detained from partaking of the full enjoyment of the beatific vision." *

And amid her labours of love, Mrs Johnstone was not left without her immediate reward. Striving in all simplicity and meekness to follow the Lord fully, she was abundantly blessed in her deed; and has recorded, that when visiting a poor believer, whom she long sought to succour, "every step seemed to raise her higher above the world, and as soon as she entered his apartment, a purer atmosphere was breathed, the divine fellowship, joy unspeakable and full of glory, was experienced." "My blessed Lord," she sometimes said, "so bears me up, that I feel like a cork floating upon the bosom of the waters, which cannot sink, the eternal God the refuge, and underneath the everlasting arms." This saint of God had heard the Saviour's words, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." She was enabled by the power and demonstration of the Spirit to act upon them, and by this process she became another among the throng who know that the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price. She imbibed the Redeemer's spirit, and was therefore made a partaker of his peace.

In contrast with all this, as the painter's depth of shade enhances the effect of his light, we might advert to the loquacious and loud professor, who appears rather to obtrude religion on our notice, than to act on the principle of not permitting the left hand to know what the right hand is doing. Casting away the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit—forgetting all that is said of the need of caution, lest we speak unadvisedly with our lips—rejecting the counsel of the wisest man, who said,

* Memoirs, pp. 33, 34.

"A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in until afterwards," all is forced upon our notice, if not paraded for our admiration. Need we wonder though such souls should often suffer shipwreck, or become the victims of their own indiscreetness?

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The True Catholic.

"Men ought to take heed of rending God's Church, by two kinds of controversies. The first is, when the matter of the point controverted is too small and light—not worth the heat and strife about it—being kindled only by contradiction. For as it is acutely and elegantly noted by one of the Fathers, 'Christ's coat, indeed, had no seam, but the Church's vesture was of divers colours. The other is, when the matter of the point controverted is weighty indeed, but is driven to an over great subtilty and obscurity, so that it seems to be a thing rather ingenious than substantial."—Lord Bacon.

The True Catholic.

The true catholic church—The fountain of true catholicity—Its different aspects—Men's counterfeits of it—I. Human opinion—II. Popery—Examples of the true catholic—Calvin—James H. Evans—Edward Bickersteth—The power of names.

We are taught in the Creed to say, "I believe in the holy catholic church." We thus learn, upon authority which is ancient, though not apostolic, the indivisibility of the church of Christ, and find that over the wide world, or through all time, the heritage which he purchased with his blood is ONE—it is one in spirit—one in essential character—and one in destiny, as prepared, or in course of preparation, for the enjoyment of God in Christ for ever.

By this holy catholic church, we do not mean any fragmentary portion of the divine institution existing in any age or land, and far less do we allude to Popery, which has so long arrogated and misapplied the sacred name of catholic. We adopt the quaint sentiment of one of the Henrys, that he "was too good a catholic to be a Roman catholic," as embodying the idea which we wish to express. The church of Christ—the true catholic church—comprehends every converted man, or every man that is born of the Spirit; and none else can ever enter it. All who are born again, are born into that kingdom of which Jesus is King, or become members of that body of which Jesus is the Head. Man, indeed, cannot draw the distinction between the pre-

of such a soul: "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule; let us mind the same things." Between truth and latitudinarianism, indeed, the believer often finds himself as if between Scylla and Charybdis; for, as he is one of those who tremble at God's Word, he is afraid to compromise even a tittle of it; but, as he has learned to reserve anathemas for sin, and as his soul expands in its affection, he delights to trace in another and another the likeness of the universal family which is named after Jesus Christ.

Men have adopted countless substitutes for the grand and simple truths which God has revealed in his Word for our guidance in life. For true glory and honour, they have the mimic glory which is won on battle-fields. For the life and immortality which are brought to light in the gospel, they have posthumous fame, that they may live in the breath of mortals as perishing as themselves. For the unsearchable riches—the treasures laid up in heaven, they have the gold which often buries those who possess it beneath its weight. For the fulness of joy, and the pleasures which are for evermore, they have enjoyments which "bite like a serpent and sting like an adder." And for catholicity of soul, men have two counterfeits. Let us glance at them—

I. It is deemed unnecessary by many to attach any consequence to men's religious opinions at all. We are reckoned not responsible for our convictions; and whatever they may be, if they are conscientiously held, man is deemed safe, and right, and religious, and is hailed in that character by thousands. God may have revealed his truth, and declared his mind, while man dislikes it—rejects it—curtails it—makes it bend to his convenience—and yet, one phase of catholicity would welcome him as if that state of soul were not dangerous or deadly at all! A man's creed may be diametrically opposed to the will of the Supreme—it may be such as to subvert the whole of revelation—it may, for example, be in the spirit of the words of Burns, who said, "that he would not quarrel with a man for his irreligion, any more than

for his want of a musical ear." According to this view, God has decided nothing, fixed nothing, revealed nothing. The feelings, the likings, or at the most the conscience of man, is made the standard of religious right and wrong; and this spurious catholicity casts the broad shield of its protection over tenets as unphilosophical as they are irreligious. It is the voice of man which is decisive in such a case, and not that voice of the Eternal which tears the very cedars asunder. The Omnipotent, with his disclosures of eternal and benevolent truth, is virtually arraigned at the bar of his creatures, while their opinions, or likings, or prejudices, are made the standard to him. It is in the bosom of the sinner that the court of last appeal is held, and not by Him who doth according to his pleasure in heaven and on earth. Can such a system be from God?

II. The second counterfeit for catholicity is that of Rome.

There is not a doctrine in the Word of God which Popery has not corrupted, or attempted to overlay and render incredible. Even the radical doctrine of the Trinity it has so obscured by its crowd of minor divinities, as to give a degree of verisimilitude to the plausibilities which unbelievers have uttered, regarding the early corruptions of Christianity. Does God declare that "by one sacrifice Christ has for ever perfected them that are sanctified?" Rome effaces that, and offers its pretended sacrifices in myriads from day to day. Does the Word of God announce that there is but one Mediator? Rome has a thousand—descending from the Virgin Mary to the most equivocal of its saints. Has the Eternal declared that all Scripture is given by inspiration, and warned us to be ruled only by the law and the testimony? All that also is cancelled, and the traditions, or the lying legends of men, are put side by side with the truth of God. Is it written in the Word, as clearly as if it were in light on the blue sky above us, that we are pardoned through the blood and righteousness of Christ alone? Popery has also its sub-

stitutes for that. It sells indulgences. It prescribes penances, and thus attempts to purchase pardon by the blood or the righteousness of a sinful being. In brief, wherever we find the Word of God with its truth, we find Popery with its antagonist corruptions. Though unconverted men may hasten to welcome the great imposture again, it has attempted to eclipse all that is pure and lovely in the gospel of the grace of God.

And it has a mimic catholicity, as it has a counterfeit gospel. The Popish catholic is one who has nothing but anathemas for those who stand beyond the pale of his church. His argument has too often been the firebrand, and his supreme tribunal the appliances of the Inquisition. Opinion hangs on the dictum of an erring creature. Mind is put into a bed like that of Procrustes; and instead of continuing the free thing which the Eternal made it, the soul becomes at once a victim and a slave—the victim of human delusions—the slave of a spiritual tyranny. Does the cold pall in which the snows of winter envelope the earth differ from that infinitely varied robe in which the suns of spring and summer clothe it? So does the dead uniformity of the catholicity of Rome differ from that unity which binds Christian to Christian, and all to their Head in glory. That is unity of life—unity of soul—a unity which originates from within, when the Holy Spirit takes possession of the mind, and not that unity which is the result of external compression, or brute force. Let any intelligent believer read the decrees of the Council of Trent, with its anathema upon anathema—its curse piled upon curse, and then let him ask, Is that the religion of Him who is LOVE?

In the case of a true catholic, one thing deserves to be specially remarked. The circle of his catholicity is always expanding. When he first passed from darkness to light, that circle might be contracted, and only a few were comprehended in its sweep. It was the personal friend, or it was the favourite section of the church, which was supposed to include all that was excellent

and lovely. But as the believer grows in grace and spiritual discernment, he acquires a new power of detecting the spiritual element wherever it exists, and welcomes brother after brother to his love. Those who search for gold have discovered the art of infallibly detecting the particles which may lurk in any substance which is put before them. However large the encumbering mass may be, or however minute the particles of the metal deemed so precious, they can be separated from the mass, and seized upon by the greedy hand of man, as the reward of his skill or the delight of his heart. By applying certain tests, or employing certain solvents, the precious is separated from the vile, and man is made glad by a share of what myriads as vainly and eagerly pursue as if it were their heaven or their god. Now, something akin to this takes place in the case of the catholic Christian. He acquires greater and ever-growing facilities for detecting truth, or tracing the likeness of the Saviour in the redeemed soul, wherever it exists. Encumbered or obscured it may be by much that is unseemly—the wood, and hay, and stubble; but in proportion as the believer himself learns to live nearer to Christ, and to resemble him more, his vision becomes clearer, and he can recognise with greater ease, and to his greater joy, "the members of the household of faith"—"the brethren"—the "born of God."

And perhaps no phase of the Christian life is so promotive of happiness as the catholic. The mind is like the body—it is pained and weakened by being fettered and confined; but delights, like a little bird upon the wing, to expatiate abroad among all who are like-minded and congenial in spirit with itself. One church for the wide world and for every age of its being—one wide-spread and really undying family—that which is named after Christ—an Elder Brother, the common centre of the whole, with glory, honour, and immortality in reversion for that wide brotherhood of love—these are thoughts fitted to elevate and regale, and

they do so. So much is this the case, that we need not scruple to say, that the most catholic Christian now dwelling upon earth is the most happy mortal there. He is so much according to the Christian standard—one spirit with the Lord—that he is one with him even in his prayers,* and nothing more remains but to be prepared for being one with him in his blessedness, his glory, and his home.

In former times, no man was more remarkable as a true catholic than Calvin the great Reformer. It is instructive to notice that he whom some regard only as an heresiarch, and a grossly immoral man—others as a bigot whose fiery energies were expended in founding a narrow-minded sect, and others still as a tyrant whose proud and swelling passions could not be satisfied with aught but the life of those who opposed his will, was in reality and in life one of the most genial and loving of men—not seldom the victim of his own confiding nature—always ready to embrace in the arms of his affection all in every land who seemed to love the Lord Jesus—and one who was ever greeted by all who knew him

"With answering looks of sympathy and joy."

"Fain would I," he writes, "that all the churches of Christ were so united, that the angels might look down from heaven and add to our glory by their harmony." Unity in the Holy Spirit, though not in the violent compression of Rome, was the object of his life-long endeavour; it ruled in his soul with the force of a passion. He proposed to Archbishop Cranmer a noble scheme of catholic combination which would have welded into one the churches of France, of England, of Scotland, and Germany; and in pleading for that scheme he says—"As far as I am concerned, if I can be of any use, I will readily pass over ten seas to effect the object in view. If the welfare of England were concerned, I should regard it a sufficient reason to act thus. But at present, when our purpose is to unite the sentiments of all good

* John xvii. 21.

and learned men, and so, according to the rule of Scripture, to bring the separated churches into one, neither trouble nor labour of any kind ought to be spared." And, to evince still farther his love to the brethren, Calvin thus concludes a letter to Luther:—"Would to God that I could hasten to you, were it to enjoy but a few hours of your conversation! Much should I prefer it, and far more useful would it be, to speak with you personally, not only on this, but on many other affairs. I hope, however, that what is not allowed us on earth will soon be granted us in the kingdom of heaven. Farewell, most renowned man, and faithful servant of Jesus Christ, and my ever revered father! May the Lord continue to guide you by his Spirit to the end, for the common good of his church!"—No rivalry is apparent here; it is not heretic opposing heretic—it is brother rejoicing over brother, "each esteeming the other better than himself." Is not the return of such a spirit much needed by the churches? All that betokens it, is to be hailed as a proof at once of vitality and vigour—an indication that He who is love, and whose love is to be measured by the gift of his Son, is about to "refresh his heritage, for it is weary."

Of those who have recently passed away from the haunts of busy men, few have exhibited this peculiar phase of the Christian life in greater perfection than the Rev. James Harrington Evans and Edward Bickersteth. The former belonged, by conscientious convictions, to what some would regard as one of the straitest sects; but, instead of exhibiting any tokens of the sectarian, he sat much at the feet of Jesus, and, in imbibing a portion of his love and holiness, imbibed at the same time no small share of his catholicity. Holding his opinions with a tenacity which could scarcely be surpassed, and announcing them, even in the intercourse of private life, with a clearness and decision which proved how entirely he was in earnest, Mr Evans yet cherished a large-hearted love for the welfare of all, while he re-

joiced with a portion of the joy which is unspeakable in the fellowship of those who are partakers of the precious faith. Guided by the Spirit, in his own language, he "shrunk from the seat of judgment upon others, because he sat there so often to judge himself, and felt too conscious of being an unprofitable servant to have any desire to pass sentence upon another." Prompted by these lowly convictions, he seemed to humble himself before even the youngest disciple to learn; and clung to all who loved the Lord Jesus, as the ivy to the ruin, or the vine to the elm which supports it. His holy catholic life was a silent and sublime rebuke to those fiery zealots, whether of Rome or elsewhere, who would apparently rejoice to wring even hope from those who "follow not with them."

But side by side with Evans, the churches may well place Edward Bickersteth. As he advanced to the culminating point of his life, we know that the principle of true catholicism had acquired the force of a ruling passion in his mind. Animated by a large measure of the spirit of love, he appeared to diffuse all around him the emotions of which his own heart was full. The rector of Watton could thus melt where he might not have been able to command, or attract and win where an attempt to control might have failed. It was, perhaps, his wide-ranging catholicity, springing from a love which could not be quenched, which constituted the secret of his power; for in his presence one must either have avowed himself a sectarian, and boldly undertaken the defence of bigotry, or yielded to the genial influence of the love which Bickersteth breathed and looked. And while, in one breath, this saint when dying exclaimed, "I have finished my work; I am longing for my rest," he could almost in the next give utterance to the presiding emotion of his soul, in panting desires that the Lord's people might be visibly, as well as actually, one in the Lord's spirit. It was a prelude to his passage into that scene where the prayer of our Lord is answered to the letter—"That they all may be one, as thou,

Father, art in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us."

There is much work in our day for the true catholic. The time appears to have come when the genuine grace must engage in a death-struggle with its counterfeit and mimic. So far have men departed from the simple truth as it is in Jesus, and the liberty which his gospel imparts, that they are ready to be deceived with religion in its most spurious forms. Ignorant of the true unity which knits believer to believer—namely, union to Christ—men are hastening to seek a centre of unity, and a source of peace, at Rome—in man, and not in God our Saviour. Just as Satan had succeeded in establishing a counterfeit Christianity, he is intoxicating the minds of men with a counterfeit catholicity, and spreading over their souls that darkness which may be felt—the sure precursor of the night which knows no morning. And what is the antidote—what are the means which God will honour to check the perversions which are thus coming in like a flood? His truth in general; or in the particular instance before us, that portion of truth which makes love to God in Christ, and then to all who are his, the queen of all the graces —the survivor even of faith and hope—the consummation of all that faith attempted—the fruition of all that hope anticipates.

All who have attended with care to the motives of human actions, have observed how widely man is influenced by names. In truth, names and not ideas are often the true rulers over men. Among the shallow and unthinking, truth is discarded, or error is welcomed and embraced, in politics, in science, and religion, because of the name which is attached to it; and that church which the Scriptures describe as characterised by "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness," has not failed to profit by this tendency. It has seized, for instance, on the sacred name of catholic, and made it exclusively its own, fastening by that assumption the brand of schism upon all who repudiate the corruptions

of Rome. But why should it be so any more? Rather let all who love the Lord Jesus be hailed as catholics in spirit, in truth, and in name. Let the members of the church universal wear the title which attaches to their nature, as born of God. Let every individual be at heart a catholic—catholic in creed—catholic in love—and catholic in prayer; and the one Lord, the one faith, the one baptism, the one God, will then find a representative and an advocate in all and in each.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Communion of Saints.

"Sing we the song of those who stand
Around the eternal throne,
Of every kindred, clime, and land,—
A multitude unknown.

Life's poor distinctions vanish here;
To-day, the young, the old,
Our Saviour and his flock appear
One Shepherd and one fold."

MONTGOMERY.

The Communion of Saints.

A contrast—Christian intercourse—The scriptural view—David—Malachi—Paul—A minister's fall—A holy brotherhood—Difficulty of Christian communion among kindred—An instance—The world's deadening effects—The cure.

THE contrast between the actual life of Christians, and the statements of Scripture regarding what that life should be, strikes us upon even the most cursory glance. So remarkable is that contrast, that it cannot but remind us of the sarcasm of him who said, after studying the Word of God upon the one hand, and the conduct of men upon the other, "Either Christianity is not to be sought in the New Testament, or these are not Christians."

And in few respects is this contrast greater than as regards the intercourse of Christian with Christian. It often happens that believers in Jesus are connected in public life, transact important business, and exchange many kindnesses, without ever discovering that they belong to the same great family at all. The fear of being deemed a hypocrite—reluctance to obtrude what may prove an unwelcome subject—a spurious form of humility—the conventional usages of modern society—the world's fear and frown—Satan's subtlety, and many other causes, combine thus to check the current of pure religion in the world. They seal the lips of many who, no doubt, rank among the children of God, and instead of letting their light shine before men, they shade or

withdraw it, so that it shines only in their own closet, or their own little circle—a taper, and not a sun. We have known two Christian men who thus transacted business with each other for a period spread over a quarter of a century, without ever discovering that they were the children of a common Father, and journeying to that Father's home. Honesty, integrity, and perfect confidence, presided over their intercourse. But the language of Canaan was never heard. They did not do *all* things in the name of the Lord Jesus. Religion was kept for private use. It was secreted even from a brother's eye; and the result was, that those Christian men walked onwards through life without helping, as they should have done, each other's joy, or burnishing each other's graces. The fact was discovered only when one of them was near the close of his pilgrimage.

Yet the Scriptures are very explicit upon this subject. While they are careful to warn us against obtruding our religion where it would only prove a stone of stumbling —while, for example, they tell us not to cast our pearls before swine, and speak of one who held in his mouth, as with a bridle, and refrained his lips even from good, when the wicked were before him—they as distinctly indicate that believers should seek to promote each other's spiritual welfare, by exhorting one another daily, to stir up their souls, lest they should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. When Sir Joseph Banks, and his fellow-voyagers round the world, were ready to drop asleep among the snows of Patagonia—a sleep from which they would never have awakened—they concerted a plan for rousing and animating each other till they reached the seashore and their ship —and the plan succeeded. Each man urged forward his neighbour, and the whole were saved. Now, the same thing is needed during the believer's journey through this life to a better. Brother is to aid brother. The strong are to help the weak. We are to bear one another's burdens, to exhort one another daily, and, in

short, to cheer each other in the path which leads to glory and to honour. He has not realised aright the difficulties of the heavenward way who is not eager to profit by all the provided helps.

The Word of God supplies examples of what has now been described. In one of the Psalms,* David earnestly exclaims: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul." He does not seek an audience of those who have forsaken the Holy One. He knows that there can be no sympathy between their souls and his. He does not expect that they who scarcely believe that they have souls at all, will care for what regards their eternity. David therefore addresses himself only to those who fear God, and who are wise unto salvation. He would let his soul touch their soul, his heart touch their heart, and then he would pour out before them his own experience of the loving-kindness of the Lord;—what he had done for the monarch's soul, how he had pitied and pardoned it, humbled it and lifted it up, left it at one time to sink into the miry clay, and at another placed it on a rock—all these David would impart. He would enlarge the experience of others by describing his own, and administer counsel, or warning, or encouragement to his fellow-believers, according to the varying moods and vicissitudes of his own spirit. As iron sharpeneth iron, so is the face of a man to his friend. David knew that, and he sought by a wise discretion to deepen the fear of the Lord in those who feared him already, or augment the happiness of those who loved to dwell on the Lord's wondrous loving-kindness in refining, rebuking, exhorting his people.

The prophet Malachi exhibits another example of this tendency in the people of God. In his age, the Jewish nation was degraded and corrupted to the core. Venality in God's service had infected the priesthood—dishonesty reigned among the people—the whole nation had robbed God—the halt and the maimed of the flock

* Ps. lxvi. 16.

were deemed fit sacrifices for Jehovah's altar; and, as ever happens in such a case, men were indignant, or felt like injured innocence, when that robbery was charged against them. "Ye have robbed me," was the accusation. "Wherein have we robbed thee?" was the proud defence against God.

It is during that state of the nation that the prophet withdraws us from the godless crowd, and affords us a glimpse of a little group of men such as might meet on the business of eternity, in an oratory by a river side, or in an upper chamber. "Then"—that is, amid the wide-spread degeneracy, where all around was godless and profane—"they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." They withdrew from the ungodliness which presided over all. They endeavoured to feed the flame which might have been extinguished by the prevailing degeneracy; and He whose eyes are on the truth, and has promised to be wherever two or three of his people are met in his name, was present in their assemblies. It was the children of the household gathering together for mutual comfort in a day of rebuke and blasphemy. It was the Lord's people fleeing to his pavilion for peace when strife was raging all around them. It was the soul which might else have been famished, seeking a portion of the heavenly manna, the children's bread, in the way which the Lord has appointed, and which he therefore owned and blessed.

But the case of Paul is the most conspicuous illustration of this subject which the Scriptures contain. His large heart often yearned for intercourse with like-minded men; but even when speaking to those who could not sympathise with his statements, he declared his conversion, and told, like David, what God had done for his soul. This lowliest yet noblest of the apostles stands before Agrippa, arraigned as a criminal, as a troubler of Israel, and perhaps about to die—he there

tells his conversion, that the grace of God may be magnified. He is with difficulty rescued from a Jewish mob; but as soon as a hearing can be obtained, he preaches his own conversion to them again, that the grace which came by Jesus Christ might again be magnified. Thrice, at least, in his eventful history, does the apostle declare at length the change which had been wrought—its manner, its accompaniments, and results. In letter after letter, moreover—to Galatia, to Philippi, to Corinth, to Timothy—in short, on every befitting occasion, he tells what he had been by nature, and what he had become by grace; and all this appears to call for a more frequent recognition of the dealings of God with the soul than we commonly observe, even among his people. It is true, that if our conversion be dubious—if we be hovering on the margin between Christ and Belial, or have made no decided entrance upon the narrow path in which God's people walk, we cannot pursue the course of Paul; our lips may well falter, or be sealed. But if we be so led by the Spirit as to be able to imitate him who spoke of "what he had seen with his eyes, what he had looked upon, and his hands had handled of the Word of life," then we may become as we ought to be, centres of influence for good, exhibiting some lineaments of the spiritual character of Paul, or some portions of the hope and the joy which emanate from the Son of God.

The cases we have now quoted are more than sufficient to lay a Christian basis for Christian intercourse. We repeat it—the wisdom which comes from above is needed to direct us aright in such a case; and the Saviour has recorded a solemn warning against its abuse. "A person may be over-full of talk about his own experience, commonly falling upon it every where and in all companies, and when it is so, it is rather a dark sign than a good one;"* but still it is an abuse of another kind utterly to neglect this means of grace. There are topics connected with the experience perhaps of every

* Dr Edwards.

believer, regarding which it is wise to be silent.* There is so much dross mingled with the ore in every case, that the wisest discrimination is needed; but all that conceded, we cannot but hold that it is a Christian duty to imitate David, or the saints of Malachi's time, and tell what God can do—what wonders grace can achieve—how perfect is the peace, and how inviolable the security, of those who wait upon the Lord. No child of God can wrap himself up in solitary selfishness, without feeling that he is inflicting a wound upon himself, or a deprivation upon others. As the full vessel is ready to overflow, or the ripe tree to shed its fruit, the full heart is ready to proclaim, on all befitting occasions, the goodness of a covenant God. As the smitten rock sent forth its gladdening stream when the prophet smote it, the heart which has been touched by the love of Christ would let that love be known—praying the while that the spirit of love and of a sound mind may preside over what it does. Such communion of soul with soul gives freshness, and depth, and stability, to the heart's experience; and he knows little of the truth in its power who has not felt his spiritual life invigorated and renewed by the holy intercourse to which the Word of God repeatedly points, in which the Holy Spirit would doubtless guide were his guidance implored, and which God has, beyond all controversy, owned to the conversion of some, and the edification of very many. If the blessedness of heaven is to be enhanced by the multitude whom no man can number, praising the Redeemer for their redemption, what can ensue but an increase of blessedness, a foretaste of heaven, when souls combine on earth to show how the Lord has led them—how he awakened, converted, humbled, saved, and made to differ from the world which knows not God? †

Yet, man will abuse the best gifts of God; and we repeat, in regard to the communion of man with man on the subject of personal experience in religion, the wisest

* See, on this subject, a most judicious work by Dr Charles Watson, entitled, *Hints on Christian Experience*, p. 36. Second Edition.
† See Dr Watson's *Hints*, pp. 56–66.

guidance is required. Some ministers of religion are fond of referring to their own conversion in the pulpit: one spoke of his with a degree of certainty which amounted to dogmatism, or in a tone which sometimes suggested doubts to the prudent and self-distrusting. And in due time he sank into revolting iniquity. Systematic deception persevered in for years—crimes which rank among the most degrading which men commit—denial and self-defence, in spite of incontestible evidence,—were all crowded into his career, while he still continued to preach the gospel to his fellow-men; and only when his sin had become so flagrant that it could scarcely be more preposterous to deny it than it would have been to aver that the sun is not the source of light, did he own his iniquity by fleeing into voluntary exile. It is such a case as this that causes many to hide their experience lest they should be self-deceived; and beyond all question, it is a beacon erected to warn the spiritually wise where hidden dangers abound, and possible shipwreck may occur.

But, in contrast with this, we have known a band of brothers in Christ who statedly met for Christian intercourse, to cheer each other's hearts and animate each other's faith. It was done by imparting the experience of each to all, and by these means the hearts of that brotherhood were linked to each other in close and holy bonds, while the glory of the Elder Brother became more and more conspicuous, reflected as it was by the diversified experience of that little band. The bold and the masculine mind, sanctified by the Spirit of all grace, gave tenseness and vigour to the more gentle and timid. The mellow maturity of the believer who had advanced far on his journey, shed a portion of its setting light upon the path of him who had more recently entered on the career which terminates in glory. There was the union of Boanerges, the son of thunder, with Barnabas, the son of consolation, there; and amid those sanctified reunions, souls were prepared for encounter-

ing the ills which assail us in a world where all are groaning and travailing together in pain, and at last for the glory, honour, and immortality, with the brotherhood on high. It is amid such scenes as these that the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, is seen in greatest beauty; and it is there that we are most of all convinced how much the souls of believers lose by wrapping themselves up in isolated selfishness, enjoying, without sharing with others, what, if shared, would become a double blessing —augmented to the believer himself, and yielding gladness to all who come within its sphere. "There is not a person," exclaimed an inmate of a poor's-house who was dying of dropsy, "there is not a person in the world, not one, that I would change places with. God is purifying me for himself, and by the means which he thinks best. It cannot be long now, and I shall see Jesus." That was a disclosure of that heavy-laden one's experience, and who would have wished such a testimony to be concealed in the bosom of that sufferer? Now, are there not ten thousand such cases, which the church would be the better for knowing, and by which the church's Head would be more glorified? Why, then, should such things be confined to poor's-houses or to dying-beds?

Connected with this subject, the question is often asked, How does it happen that brothers and kindred commune so little with each other regarding spiritual things? Is it because they suppose that their lives and their hearts are so well known to each other, that they must be mutually incredulous regarding the soul's condition? Or, is it because they love each other so well, that they cannot harbour any thoughts but thoughts of good? Or, is it pride and false delicacy which rule? Or, is it some undefined feeling which paralyses or renders mute? It were difficult to decide, and the reason is probably complex, but the fact is indisputable. "The truth is one of every day's observation, that husbands and wives often converse more freely on the experi-

mental points of piety with those who are comparatively strangers, than with each other." "We have seen even children more ready to open their minds on this subject to friends less nearly allied, than to the parent who has watched over them with prayerful solicitude."* We know two brothers who have been honoured not a little by their common Lord. He had been dealing with each of them by his quickening Spirit, and they had both begun to inquire what they must do to be saved; nay, they had made some progress in adjusting the question, without discovering each other's condition. They kept the secret locked up in their own bosoms, and it was accident rather than design which led to the disclosure which was mutually gladdening. From that day they became the helpers of each other's joy, and were linked together in more lasting bonds than before; but their case tends to show how the work of the Spirit may be repressed by being concealed.

Perhaps there is nothing which shows more clearly the ungodliness of the heart than the oblivion of God and eternity, which reigns even in society called Christian. Such is its condition, that it would require the faith and patience of a martyr to oppose and to correct the evil, and we close as we commenced by referring to the dangers and the deadening influence of such society. How often does it happen, that in circles where men would feel outraged were their Christianity suspected, it is difficult to discover any tokens of a living faith in Christ? In speech and in behaviour all is of the earth earthy; the pride of life appears to reign supreme; the most glorious themes which can engross the mind of man seem upon system excluded and proscribed, or, if they are recognised, it is in a decent ceremony rather than as an all-pervasive and presiding power. 'A Kempis may have been legal to a degree which bordered upon the morbid, but there is truth in his assertion, that he never mixed in society and withdrew as ready for divine communion as when he entered. It puts lead upon

* Henry's *Difficulties of the Anxious Inquirer*. Letter 1.

the believer's spirit, till, like a mewed eagle, he is unfit to soar—the salt loses its savour—the city is hid—the candle is put under a measure. Where grace exists, it is enfeebled and withered amid such scenes; the ascendency of the world is deepened and prolonged, and we may as well expect the body to prosper amid the malaria of an Indian jungle or the Roman Campagna, as the soul to be in health in such society. Better far to withdraw from such scenes, than to be partakers of their earthliness, though it were better still to be enabled, by the grace of God, to elevate man's intercourse with man, to turn it heavenward and Godward, so that our communion on earth should become the communion of saints indeed—a prelude to that which awaits the ransomed of the Lord in glory. Did "the word of Christ dwell in us richly," then the accompanying admonition would be cordially obeyed, "Teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Experience of David—a Model.

"By whom was David taught
To aim the deadly blow,
When he Goliath fought,
And laid the Gittite low?
No sword nor spear the stripling took,
But chose a pebble from the brook.

'Twas Israel's God and King
Who sent him to the fight;
Who gave him strength to sling,
And skill to aim aright.
Ye feeble saints, your strength endures,
Because young David's God is yours."

COWPER.

The Experience of David—a Model.

Its different aspects—1. Panting after God, and then losing all sense of his favour—2. Rejoicing in the growth of holiness, and then sinking into sin—3. Spiritual discernment—Giving place to ignorance and darkness—Encouragement—A warning—Why was David called the "man after God's own heart?"—David Brainerd—Jonathan Edwards—Vicissitudes in experience.

THE "man after God's own heart," cannot but prove a noble study for all who would go to the Bible for their religion—who would not rest contented with the world's standard, but evermore appeal to the law and the testimony as their rule and guide. Who among the sons of men could bear to have their history written by the Holy Spirit, as David had his? And when a history is written by Him whose eye is like a flame of fire, shall we wonder though much that defiles be discovered, or much that should lay man in the dust be unmasked? But should we not also rejoice, that in the wondrous record, we have at once a beacon and a pilot—a model and a test? His psalms are a storehouse from which we may draw for ever. Written under the inspiration of Him to whom every thing is naked and open, they trace the secrets of every heart, and meet the wants of every spirit. They are pre-eminently the book of omniscience—and are "grateful as the manna which descended from above, and which conformed itself to every palate." Unlike the objects of earth, which speedily pall, and lead only to fatigue or to disgust, these wondrous hymns are relished with an ever-grow-

ing avidity; for it is true that he who tastes them the oftenest, will relish them the best.

In tracing the experience of David, we can do little more than furnish a catalogue of his spiritual transitions. At one time, we find him on the heights, and walking there rejoicing in his God; at another, he is in the lowest depths, and in bitterness of spirit mourning there in his complaint, and making a noise. When we can follow him, he leads us now to the threshold of heaven, but anon, he appears before us abject and debased again. An owl in the desert—a pelican in the wilderness—a crane or a sparrow upon the house-top, are some of his own selected emblems; but, in contrast with these, we find him at other times invoking the help of universal nature in praising Him who alone doeth wonders, and whose ways are past finding out. Contemplate, then, some of the details of David's character. We present them briefly in the way of contrast.

At one time, this singer tells that he panted for God, the living God, like the hart for the water-brooks. Nearness to his God was the grand craving of his soul, and with nothing less could he be satisfied. As a portion for David's heart, all creation without the Creator would have been as vain, as the cattle on a thousand hills were insufficient to atone for the sins of men. The primal law of man's being—living for God, and rejoicing in him—was thus ruling in David's spirit. Jehovah was the portion of his inheritance. In his favour there was life, and in his loving-kindness there was something better than life. Like a little child rejoicing in the smile of the mother who loves it, does the soul of the king rejoice in God, the living God. When Jehovah was near, the scene was all gilded by sunshine—it was not merely nature made glad, but grace rejoicing in the restoration of man's primal blessedness.

But a day or two passes over David, and the bright scene is changed. Night and day God's hand now presses heavily upon him. His soul is full of troubles. His life draws nigh to death. He is counted among

those who go down to the pit. His God has laid him in darkness and in deeps. His wrath lies hard upon David; and the outcry of his troubled soul is this: "Thy fierce wrath goeth over me—thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water."

It is thus that the Sovereign Spirit deals with the souls of men. Is the grace of the Spirit imparted?—is the soul enlightened and sustained from on high? Then it can soar, and sing, and rejoice even in the Holy One as its portion—it can look upon all nature as an emanation from God, and upon grace as the unfolded love of his heart. But, is man left to the resources of his own nature?—is grace withheld, and is man abandoned to find his own way, or lean upon his own strength? Then, unstable as water, he cannot excel. His very soul is poured out within him. His eye mourns by reason of affliction. He is wretched, and wo-worn, and downcast—so that the experience of David is repeated from day to day in many an exercised soul. In the Lord and on the Rock, we have righteousness and strength—in self, we have only labour and sorrow.

Again, in some stages of his experience, we find David rejoicing in his own progress in holiness. He was the companion of all them that feared God. He prayed that integrity and truth might constantly preserve him. He was determined to wash his hands in innocence, and would endure no wicked thing before him. He would not even sit with dissemblers. He made a covenant with his eyes that he might not sin against his God. He hated every false way; and his whole soul rejoiced as he thus grew in grace, and waxed more and more like-minded with the Holy One. The work of the Spirit seemed then advancing to maturity, and holy joy and hope were the welcome inmates of the soul.

But the fine gold was speedily changed; all these aspirations were forgotten, and David sank back into the depths of sin. Out of these depths he had to cry in the bitterness of his soul to God for pardon. He

soared as man had never done before; but he also fell as man had never fallen, and the strong compunction which prompted his cry was embodied in the words, "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." He had reason to blush and be ashamed now, before the God in whose favour he had before so exceedingly rejoiced. He still prays —he cannot forsake the throne; but sin has yielded its bitter fruits—for "the end thereof is death," and wo and lamentation become the portion of the king.

And we should mark what it is that is uppermost in the conscience of him who has consented to inflict such a wound and laceration upon his own heart. He had sinned against the laws of men. He had violated some of the deepest principles which are intended to promote the union and the welfare of society. He had set an example of cruelty, of cunning, and impurity, which thousands would be too quick to imitate. But, deeply as he had transgressed against the laws of man and human society, all that seemed as nothing in the eyes of the humbled and self-harassed man. It was as his sin was committed against God, that his soul felt it to be heaviest, most bitter, and most pungent. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned." I exclude for the present every other thought—*that* enters my soul like iron. Thee, with whom I have so often enjoyed communion! Thee, who didst take me from the sheep-cot, and place me on a throne! Thee, who hast guided me by thine eye, and shielded me by thy hand! Thee, who hast spread a table for me in the midst of my enemies, and made my cup run over; against Thee only have I sinned —I lose sight of all besides—but the big enormity of that offence weighs down my soul with wretchedness.

Here, then, we have another aspect of David's experience—another example of what man may be when grace is guiding him, and what he becomes when nature is again ascendant. Witness David's zeal to-day, his delight in God, his love to his people. See the king

associating with all who fear the Lord—resisting mockery and scorn for the truth's sake, and caring for nothing except the loving-kindness of his God. But meet him on the morrow; see him now arraigned before his own conscience—self-accused, self-convicted, self-condemned,—and who does not read in all this another manifestation of the truth, that in his lost estate, man is altogether vanity? In God, and by his grace, we can do all things; but our own strength is only weakness, our own wisdom folly; and the burning convictions of many a troubled conscience tell, that he who thinketh he standeth may well take heed lest he fall. There is that within the holiest of the sons of men, which would make them all that David in his lowest depths became, did not the grace of God restrain, prevent, convert, and constantly uphold.

But let us notice another contrast in the life of David. His spiritual discernment was at times unspeakably acute. Living near to God, and seeing light in his light—poring upon the Word, and bringing up from its depths the riches which are hidden there, his eye could sometimes range over the whole amplitude of spiritual things, while his soul felt ever-growing delight in them all. The flame is not more keen, nor does it more naturally shoot upwards, than the spirit of the "man after God's own heart." The commandments of his God had made him wiser than his enemies; and the reason was, that these statutes were ever before him. He had more understanding than all his teachers; and the solution of that is found in the fact, that the testimonies of God were his "meditation all the day." He thus grew in grace—he savoured the things which were of God. Like his own graceful emblem, he resembled a tree planted by the rivers of water, so that like the palm tree flourishing was this righteous one.

But in this respect, also, we must present David in contrast with himself. He had cause at another time to exclaim—"So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee." He "was envious at the foolish,

when he saw the prosperity of the wicked;" forgetting that though they might spread out like a green bay tree, yet they would pass away so as to cease to be—they would be sought for, but no where be found. In short, his understanding of the ways of God was darkened. His spiritual perception was blunted; and when he sought to know the ways and dispensations of Jehovah, he was constrained to confess that it was "too painful for him,"—somewhat like Zophar reproving Job, David was compelled to say, "It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do?"

Now, this also sheds the very light of heaven upon the experience of man. As long as we dwell near to God, and have the soul irradiated by his light and Spirit, all truth is simple, gladdening, and sustaining; but when we turn away from God, or seek light elsewhere than in the Father of lights, first a twilight, and then a midnight creeps over the soul. As long as the way to the throne is much frequented, and the spirit which is in us kept vigilant by communion there with God, spiritual truth is like some clear, transparent sea sleeping in sunshine, where the eye can penetrate many fathoms deep, and behold the riches or the wonders which are there. But when the throne of God is forsaken, or approached only with a formalist's step, and a formalist's petition, spiritual truth then appears confused, turbid, and inexplicable, not because it is so in itself—it is charged with the goodness and the love of God to man—but because we have lost the power of spiritual discernment, by turning away from Him who gives us the light of the knowledge of his glory, by imparting his own Spirit to the soul.

In one point of view, this case of David suggests encouragement, and in another it sounds a warning to the people of God. It offers encouragement to the earnest soul; for if the very "man after God's own heart" was thus subject to vicissitudes and sad alternations, who can now presume that the Spirit of all grace will exempt him from such changes? If even he who

walked so closely with God, and panted so eagerly after his presence, and mourned and wept when God was away from his soul, had so much darkness to endure, and so many spiritual perplexities to encounter, can we expect utterly to escape such conflicts as we journey towards Zion? Nay, we are forbidden to count it strange although even fiery trials should be sent to test us.

But David's experience brings, moreover, a warning. The Sovereign Spirit *may* leave us in his sovereignty to darkness. As a portion of our discipline, and to train us to live exclusively by faith, and not by feeling, he may withhold light, and joy, and repose, when he sees that we would *live upon these*, and not by faith upon the Son of God. But ordinarily, such darkness, and perplexity, and trouble, flow from sin committed, and God's Holy Spirit grieved; and should we not, therefore, live upon our watchtower lest we be overtaken by sin? If hope, and peace, and spiritual joy, refuse to dwell in the same soul with tolerated iniquity, should not all that urge every child of God to live near to the Father of lights, in whom is no darkness at all? It is true, "Le Christianisme est un fait, une verité, une vie, une *experience*," —but it is an experience of labour and sorrow, in the case even of the child of God, when he consents to tamper with the abominable thing; and the conclusion of the whole matter is, that He who is without variableness or shadow of turning, should be more and more our stay —He who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, should be more and more the rock of our confidence. Blessed be God for the recorded experience of David—its contrasts of light and shadow—of joy and gloom—but, after all, it is the sinless Lamb of God that is our only model, and, sitting at his feet, we are both pointed to heaven and prepared for it—"With open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Why was David called the man after God's own heart?

Whence that highest encomium ever pronounced upon any of the children of the fallen Adam?

His feeling after God—his restlessness, except as he reposed upon God, but his perfect peace and blessedness there, is one answer to the question. It was in the infinite I AM, that David's soul lived, and moved, and had its being; and that is what every child of man should do, if he would fulfil the first law of his creation. Not the gifts of God, but God himself, is the centre of rest to the heart of the renewed man.

David's love for the Word was, doubtless, another reason why he was praised as he is. Hear how his soul pants, or see how it soars and aspires, in psalm after psalm—and then understand why the eulogy which we have quoted is twice embodied in the Word of God. It was not because David was perfect, but because he toiled and panted for perfection, according to the standard of the sanctuary, that he stands the highest among the sons of men.

Among more recent followers of the Lamb, it were easy to instance some in whose experience contrasts similar to those of David's soul may be found. Open the Life of David Brainerd, and perhaps the first clause which there meets your eye will be one like this, "My spiritual conflicts to-day were unspeakably dreadful, heavier than the mountains. I seemed enclosed, as it were, in hell itself. I was deprived of all sense of God—even of the being of a God; and that was my misery." But, on the same page, you may read as follows:—"Enjoyed, I trust, something of God this morning in secret. O how divinely sweet is it to come into the secret of his presence, and abide in his pavilion!" Or, open a page of the Life of Jonathan Edwards,—under one date you read, "This week, I found myself so far gone, that it seemed to me I should never recover more. Let God of his mercy return unto me, and no more leave me thus to sink and decay." Under another, you find this saint of God rejoicing "in the heavenly state, ... where reigns heavenly, sweet, calm, and de-

lightful love without alloy. . . . . How sweetly will those who thus mutually love join together in singing the praises of God and the Lamb!" All this should point us more, and keep us nearer to the Unchanging One—our heaven while here, and the heaven of our heaven when going hence.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Experience of the Ungodly.

"Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love, and power;
He is able,
He is willing. Doubt no more!"

HART.

The Experience of the Ungodly.

The power of conscience—The process by which it is silenced—Colonel Gardiner—Lord Chesterfield—A self-accused murderer—John Owen's counsel—The power of conscience illustrated—The sinner a coward, and shrinks from the godly—The reason—Illustrations—Self-immolators—Hindooism—Lord Byron—Richard B. Sheridan.

WHILE the believer in Jesus has an experience which is peculiarly his own—a joy and a sorrow with which the world cannot intermeddle—the ungodly have also their own peculiar experience. The contrast between these two may aid us, like the effects of shade in painting, in forming an estimate of the joys of the believer.

It is not to be supposed that the ungodly can triumph over conscience all at once, or instantaneously sear and subdue it into silence. Even a heathen could say, that no one ever suddenly became very base; and it is by a gradual process that salutary checks are trampled on, that warnings and compunctions are stifled, that barriers are taken out of the way, and the course made plain for the soul to precipitate itself upon the second death. In tracing such a course, it may be difficult to indicate all the stages which are passed in every individual case; but a general outline may be easily drawn. The man who is bent on snapping the bonds which should bind him to holiness, must begin with a struggle; and that struggle is always one of pain, because it is one of antagonism to truth. As surely as God has attached happiness to holiness, and misery to guilt, the first plunge into sin is followed by bitterness; and the sad experi-

ence of such a soul is equivalent to a divine premonition that the wages of sin is death. It cannot be a happy thing to despise a mother's warnings. It must plant thorns in our pillow for a time to enter on a course which may break a mother's heart; and as we sometimes hear of infectious diseases spreading with devastating force in a family or neighbourhood, till desolation has completed its work, and swept the inhabitants away, the dark effects of a sinful career are often seen and felt at its very commencement, forewarning man of what the accumulated and crushing results will be when "sin has conceived and brought forth death." The misguided men who immolate themselves beneath the wheels of the idol car of Juggernaut, are not more certainly mangled by that fatuity than the soul of man is lacerated and agonized by sin.

The case of Colonel Gardiner sheds some light upon this subject. It is known that at one period of his life he was dissolute and abandoned, and seemed given over to work all sin with greediness. To have looked only upon the exterior, and judged from what appeared to men, we might have concluded that he was happy—pleasure seemed to follow pleasure in rapid and exciting succession in his life. But what does Gardiner tell of his own experience, while passion and not reason, while sin and not the fear of God, possessed the control of his mind? Was it a source of joy to live in a state of conflict with Jehovah? Is his history such as to encourage the delusion that the Most High may be disobeyed, and yet man continue happy? Nay: Gardiner tells us that while rioting in sin, and indulging all without restraint, he felt so self-degraded that he envied his very dog; he desired to be as the brute was, devoid of conscience, and of the terrible power of self-crimination. So far was he from finding sin pleasant, or the wages of iniquity enriching, that he felt its degrading effects pressing like a heavy chain upon his soul, and amid the struggles or the reproaches of a conscience which could not be utterly overcome, or which refused to be either bribed

or laid to sleep, he learned from sad experience the meaning of the truth which tells of a worm which never dies, and a fire which never shall be quenched. Before conscience utterly expires, it often exhibits a spasmodic power, like men who die in delirium; and when it thus awakes, all the powers of the soul quake before its terrible tribunal.

Now, this is only one instance of an universal law; and could we see into the bosoms of those who have entered on a wicked career—could we discover all the anguish which sin occasions as step after step is taken, or plunge after plunge is made, we should find that the burning brain which follows the debauch, is but a material emblem of the burning conscience which it kindles; or that the fevered frame is only a visible token of the power which consumes the bosom. The premature death of many who have entered on such a path, and fallen there by their own right hand, as surely, though not so suddenly, as if they had compassed their destruction by open violence, is often a proof of the power of conscience, protesting and appealing to God on high against the guilty one's career. The poor shattered worldling, like a dismantled wreck after a storm, may be viewed as addressing us in the language of Lord Chesterfield, before he died. "I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world," he said, "and I do not regret their loss. I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which move the gaudy machines, and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decorations, to the astonishment of an ignorant audience."—"Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."

It is recorded, that on one occasion a man who had perpetrated the crime of murder, but long escaped from detection, confessed his sin to Dr John Owen, and asked his counsel as to the course which he ought to pursue. Years had elapsed since the deed was committed, and the likelihood of detection was at an end. But goaded

evermore by the inward monitor, who anticipated the verdict of the last assize, the perpetrator could not rest till he stood confessed and self-condemned. Death seemed preferable to the anguish which he had endured, or the gnawing remorse which haunted him; and the criminal was thus compelled to acknowledge, that though he could destroy a fellow-mortal, he could not silence the voice of God's vicegerent in his soul. The counsellor to whom he applied advised the criminal to surrender himself to justice. The high-souled puritan supposed that the laws both of God and of man demanded that course; the guilty one complied, surrendered himself to justice, and died to expiate his crime. Now, a case such as this indicates, as if in characters of blood, that "the way of transgressors is hard." The soul which has consented to sin, inflicts a deadly wound upon itself, and that wound tends by an inevitable law to the second death. Only Omnipotence can prevent that result, and a burden which is greater than man can bear either haunts or hurries the offender to the tomb. Cain, in short, is the prototype of such men; for whatever was the brand which was set upon the first fratricide by the Holy One and the Just, it only did for the body what sin does for every unforgiven soul. If it be a true saying, that faith alone can lead the soul to heaven, while experience alone—that is, an experience which does not flow from faith—can lead it only to perdition, how surely is that the close of a career in which men experience only the power of sin first to irritate conscience, then, after a career of guilt, to silence it, then to sear it, till the climax of the curse is to believe that we are happy in sinning! It is one of the warnings of Scripture, that such men will anticipate the decisions of the Judge, and at last call upon the mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of God and of the Lamb.

Amid the rigours of a winter of more than usual severity, we were once surprised by a visit from one who had many years before been familiarly known as a school-

fellow, but who had long been forgotten amid the divergent paths in which Providence had led us. He was pale, wasted, and wo-worn, to an extent which prevented him from being easily recognised. It was instantly obvious, however, that he was discomposed, or rather wretched, to an extent which suggested the idea of insanity. His history was soon told. A youth of superior parts, indeed of eminent gifts, he had been overtaken in a sin which he felt would inevitably disgrace him. He fled from the scene of its perpetration, and under an impulse which we have never been able entirely to explain, he passed over the entire breadth of our island, as if he would flee from detection, to unbosom his feelings and compunctions to one who had become comparatively a stranger by the lapse of years, and who could scarcely recognise him when seen again. His agitated frame and hurried step betrayed the strong power which was stirring within him; and, far more eloquently than words, they told how bitter and how consuming is the experience of many a sinner. The fall was one which is common—it is ruining the souls, while it wastes the substance, of tens of thousands in this land; but the misery which it inflicts upon the body, from the first stages of inebriation till trembling madness precipitates the bloated and exhausted frame into the grave, does not more plainly proclaim its ravages on the body than that strange visit proclaimed the goading effects of guilt upon the soul. The self-condemned fugitive disappeared nearly as rapidly as he came; but he had hurried over one hundred and fifty miles at the bidding of an angry or a troubled conscience, as if to demonstrate how sin can goad, harass, and eventually destroy.

The very language in which some misguided men describe their enslaved condition, is a proof of all this—"My habits," exclaims the drunkard, "are too strong now to be ever broken off;" and he rushes anew to degradation. Now, what is that but a shameless confession of the bondage to which the self-destroyer has been reduced? His experience is that of a slave.

"My passions," exclaims the debauchee, "are too powerful now to be resisted with success:" he also rushes upon ruin; and what is that but another confession of the bitter bondage to which man is reduced by his own consent?

"My love of gaiety," exclaims a third, "is too rooted ever to be changed; I must die as I have lived:" he also whirls along in his giddy career; and what is that but another acknowledgment that things which perish in the using, drive on the mind beyond the reach of reason, of conscience, and religion? There is surely deepest misery involved in such things—a misery which reaches its climax when the self-ruined sufferer ceases to be conscious that he is degraded or enslaved at all.

But the painful experience of the sinner may be exhibited in another way. The restlessness which he often feels in the presence of one whom he regards as better than himself, proves the pain which is dominant within him. The averted eye—the confused speech—the flushing cheek, or the pale and quivering lip—all betoken how much is felt in such a case, though an attempt may be made to smother and suppress it. In short, in the presence of the virtuous, sinners are often ill at ease, and gladly escape from their hated and oppressive presence. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" is the question which they would ask, could their lips pronounce what their hearts feel. They resemble the foul bird which fattens upon carrion, but is said to sicken at a perfume, for, when in the midst of his godless companions, such a man may be bold; he is cheered and encouraged by the proximity of those who are like-minded with himself. But it has been strongly said of him that he cannot stand alone, and when deprived of extraneous help, he sinks into the timidity of a coward—he shrinks from the contact of a mind, or the scrutiny of an eye, which he feels to be purer than his own. You can trace the hurricane by its ravages, or the swollen torrent by the line of its devastations; and in like manner, you can trace the ravages of sin by its

effects on the look as well as the heart, and soul, and home of a transgressor. It often converts him into a moral coward, for "the wicked flee when no man pursues."

The explanation of all this is simple. When man outrages the law of his God, what can happen but misery? When he rushes on the bosses of the Almighty's buckler, what can result to one so infatuated but wo? When the creature of a day proclaims that the Holy One shall not rule over him, is he not sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind? If the father of lies be preferred to the God of truth, what can ensue but degradation? The primal law of man's existence is, that he shall find his felicity in the favour of his God—that is his Eden; it constitutes his heaven; but if that favour be forfeited, and that primal law outraged, what can follow but wretchedness? Behold, then, the inevitable necessity of suffering on the part of a wayward sinner. His unsoothed sorrow—his wasting anguish—his undried tears—and still more, his conscience gnawing like an undying worm, or consuming like a fire in his bones—are all like the first drops from the vial of the Holy One's wrath. Does substance cast a shadow in sunshine? Does a wound or a laceration give pain? Does the ocean ebb and flow by laws which admit of demonstration? By a law as certain and as fixed, sin leads to misery in man. Nero himself could not utterly extinguish conscience by all his brutalities; it awoke at last, and even in him the triumph of conscience was complete. Nay, even Judas could not bribe it to silence by his thirty pieces of silver; conscience drove him on to the first and second death in one. Thrones and diadems can not hush its voice, when they have been acquired by guilt. Despair, madness, and death, have followed in the train of such outrages, and many a royal murderer has felt just as Jugurtha did when he exclaimed—

"Sleep!
I'll sleep no more, until I sleep for ever.
When I slept last, I heard Adherbal scream—
I'll sleep no more! I'll *think* until I die."

The sad history of our world affords many dismal illustrations of the experience of sinners. The researches of Baron von Harthausen have lately brought to light some appalling proceedings which are common among some fanatical sects in the north of Russia. One of these, the Self-Immolators, hold opinions or a creed which none but the initiated know—the practices, however, to which that creed instigates are revolting. Their name indicates their leading tenet; and the manner in which the self-sacrifice is accomplished, furnishes one of the direst proofs of the wretchedness which sin entails, which can be found in the whole history of man since the fall. An excavation is dug in the earth, proportioned in size to the number of associated victims. Amid solemn mysteries, the pit is surrounded by piles of combustible materials of various kinds; and when a sufficient quantity has been heaped together, the Immolators descend, sometimes to the number of a hundred, into the cavern. Together they set fire to the faggots; they collect in the centre of the excavation; and there, amid yells of triumph and wildly-stimulating songs, they are consumed to ashes in the fire which themselves have kindled. At other times, the sacrifice takes place in a house which has been surrounded with wood, and all that can promote a conflagration. Into that house the Immolators retire. They shut themselves in; they set fire to the fabric, and perish amid songs which betoken the wildness of the jubilee. The neighbours may assemble, but they do not disturb the sacrifice; for "the fire baptism" is a thing to be exulted in, not repressed! —That sacrifice is deemed religion; but is it not a bitter portion of the curse?

Or, pass from the North to the East, and glance at another dismal spectacle there. The idolatry in which Hindostan is soaked brings terrible woes in its train—embodying the anathema of Him who is Love against it. Tens, nay hundreds of thousands, assemble at some idolatrous festival. Infectious diseases are conveyed thither, or generated on the spot, by the crowded masses

of filth and pollution. The plague begins its ravages, and thousands die. The survivors flee from the spot; but they carry death to their homes—they spread over the country, and wretchedness unutterable seems to follow in their train. Cholera comes next to glean what the plague has spared. Whole villages are left without an inhabitant; and over a wide-spread territory the angel of death seems to brood, with none to disturb his reign. The mortality occasioned by the pilgrimage of a single year to Jugurnaut ranges from ten to twenty thousand; and then the scene is so full of horror, that humanity shrinks appalled. Dead bodies in every stage of decay are there. The soil is black with the ashes of funeral-piles for the dead and the living. The bleached bones of pilgrims lie scattered all around. The smell of wasted human flesh threatens to stifle the visitor, for the stench from decaying corpses is suffocating. The wild dogs and the vultures, sated to inactivity, crowd the horrid scene—and yet death amid such a scene is deemed "entering into Elysium," or "the gates of heaven."*

This is also done in the prostituted name of religion; but is it not a proof that the way of transgressors is hard?

"Be sure your sin will find you out," is the announced decree of God; and it is sometimes verified in a way which illustrates our present subject. The sin of intoxication is again and again pointed out in Scripture, as excluding men from glory; and yet it is one of the vices into which tens of thousands rush in spite of every warning. Now, is it not a striking fact, that the victims of that vice have sometimes actually taken fire? They have been consumed, science cannot yet tell us how, by spontaneous combustion; and passed into eternity amid flames kindled by their own right hand. Is it not a strange but significant exhibition of the wages of sin? Is it not nature enforcing the lessons of revelation, or telling, in letters of fire, the sad experience of the wicked?

* Clarkson's India and the Gospel, pp. 148, 149.

With the Word of God for a key to explain such things, we see how significantly He proclaims that the wages of sin is death—it may be a double death in one.

Lord Byron's history supplies another example. He declined to be ranked among those infidels "who deny the Scriptures, and wish to remain in unbelief." Nay, it is recorded in his life, that he professed "himself desirous to believe, as he experienced no happiness in having his religious opinions so unfixed." He was unable, he confessed, "to understand the Scriptures; but those who conscientiously believed them he could always respect, and was disposed to trust in them more than others; but he had met with so many whose conduct differed from the principles which they professed, and who seemed to profess those principles either because they were paid to do so, or from some other motive which an intimate acquaintance with their character would enable one to detect, that altogether he had seen few if any whom he could rely upon as truly and conscientiously believing the Scriptures."

Such appears to have been the farthest that Lord Byron could go; and it will be seen how fallacious were the principles of his judgment. He tried the Scriptures by men, and not men by the Scriptures. The sphere in which he moved was one from which vital religion was wellnigh banished; and yet, by those whom he occasionally met in that sphere, he tested the truth of God. "He could not understand the Scriptures." True; but had he sat down to study them, they would have taught him both how to understand and how to delight in them. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." But the yearnings of Lord Byron's nature for something more satisfying than aught he had ever enjoyed, are full of meaning: they prove to us again that the way of transgressors is hard.

Or farther, when Mrs Sheppard recorded her touching prayer on his lordship's behalf, and when that prayer was transmitted by her widowed husband, Byron wrote:

"I can assure you that all the fame which ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance, would never weigh in my mind against the pure and pious interest which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my welfare. In this point of view, I would not exchange the prayer of the deceased in my behalf for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon, could such be accumulated upon a living head." Groping thus, and deeply moved, it seems as if he were not far from the kingdom of heaven; but even his powers could not effect an entrance there, and is not his confession one of the most significant ever made by self-deceived and self-ruined man? This noble nature, bowed to the earth by the effects of sin, was seeking there what he could find only in the God of heaven—and amid all the sad and solemn moral wrecks which the history of the past exhibits, few are more saddening than the spectacle of Byron, now indulging in deep emotion over the supplications of a child of God on his behalf, and anon relapsing into the downward course which he had so fatally pursued.

The life and death of Richard Brinsley Sheridan is one of the most instructive in the history of our land. Half-a-century ago, he was perhaps the most brilliant orator of our most brilliant period. Thousands hung enchained and enraptured on his lips. His wit was as keen as his eloquence was great. His power as a dramatist was inferior to neither. He sat at the right hand of royalty, and, in short, gleamed like a meteor among his fellow-men. Yet, what was he as a moral being? At all times unprincipled—at length a bloated drunkard, drowned in debt—deserted by his once obsequious friends—the embodiment of wretchedness and wo—stretched on a miserable pallet, from which he hourly expected to be borne away to prison, the worn-out worldling ended his days, without a friend to close his dying eye—with scarcely one to weep beside his grave. He had worshipped the world's god, and he reaped the result. He had tried to find happiness in violating the

will of the Supreme; and as his brilliant powers had been wasted in wickedness, the penalty was wo and tribulation. He fed upon ashes, and had the water of wormwood to drink.

This is the sum of the whole matter: The believer in Christ has communion with his reconciled God; the unpardoned sinner must, sooner or later, commune with his own irritated and accusing conscience. A believer in Christ has consented, under the power and demonstration of the Spirit, to obey the primary law of his being, and find his centre of repose or his happiness in God; the unpardoned sinner seeks his happiness in contending with Omnipotence. The experience of the one is, therefore, a foretaste of heaven; the kingdom of God is within him; he is at least on his way back to Eden; —the experience of the other is a prelude to misery eternal; for as holiness is the embryo of everlasting blessedness, sin is the germ of perdition. Let that bud expand, and its fruit is the second death.

CHAPTER XL.

An Irreligious Old Age.

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life,—quite on the verge of heaven.
Fly, ye profane! if not, draw near with awe,
Receive the blessing, and adore the Power
That threw in this Bethesda your disease. . . .
Heaven waits not the last moment; owns her friends
On this side death."

YOUNG.

An Irreligious Old Age.

Silence of Scripture regarding death-scenes—The extent of irreligion—Examples—Napoleon Bonaparte's death—Sir Duncan Macgregor—Schleiermacher—Sir Humphry Davy on death—Dying sayings of eminent believers—Their lesson—Francis Spira—Lamartine—The heroes of the French Revolution—Dr. John Cheyne—Rev. H. W. Fox—Dr. William Gordon—The power of faith in death.

It is remarked that in the Scriptures we have few examples of dying scenes. They rather appear to be carefully avoided; for it is the life rather than death which the Word of God seeks to regulate. We know how the proto-martyr died, and some of his last words are recorded. The thief on the cross is another of whose state of mind, in the article of death, some glimpses are given. David also, at his dying hour, is shown to us as resting on the well-ordered covenant. But a veil is cast over the death-scenes of the apostles; and even when the death of the Baptist, and of James, is mentioned, no hint is dropt of any testimony which they emitted—of the faith which sustained, or the fears which distressed them.

Are we, then, taught by this silence of Scripture not to regard the closing scenes of life? Nay; we are only warned not to cherish the delusion that it is merely by the few last hours or breaths of earthly existence that we are to judge, but by the life and the conduct of man; and, keeping that principle in view, we may now study the soul's experience on the eve of meeting the Judge.

It sometimes happens, that on their dying bed men have to commence the whole work of preparation for eternity. From day to day, or year to year, they have delayed—and the work of preparing to meet their God, if ever done at all, must be done amid the agonies or the weakness of the perishing body, and the fears and forebodings of the agitated soul. In a few days or hours, the sins of a lifetime are to be repented of, and the concerns of eternity adjusted. Amid struggles for breath—or restless tossings to and fro—or the burning heat of fever—or the tremor of palsy—or the bloated imbecility of dropsy—or the haggard emaciation of consumption—or the helplessness of dotage—the mind must turn to the great white throne—or else sink without an effort into an undone eternity. Even heathenism could say in Greece,—

Σημερον μαλλα μαλ'τα δ'αυριον τις ιδει;—

and in Italy,—

"Qui non est hodie, cras minus aptus erit;"—

but unmoved alike by reason and revelation, men pass on to death unwarned and unprepared—so that they who watch for souls often meet men on their death-bed utterly unfit for all that is before them. They may have spent their threescore years and ten in a land of light and privilege. Responsibility for what they enjoyed, and entreaties to enjoy it in reality, may have been sounded in their ears from Sabbath to Sabbath; yet they reach the limits of existence upon earth unprepared for the realities of death and of judgment. They knew the Saviour's name in infancy, and they know only his name when on the verge of the eternal world—they are about to shoot the gulf which separates the seen from the unseen, this world of shadows from the next world of realities, upon a mere peradventure—a chance of escape from the unconverted sinner's doom.

One such man we knew well; and the chamber in which he was immured in helpless impotency, for some years before his death, furnished a strange study of

human nature. The feeble one sat from day to day confronted with the Eternal, and evermore reminded to prepare to meet his God; but unwarned and unprepared, his mind was constantly burrowing in the earth, or trying to nestle among the things which are seen and temporal. Tell him of the way to the Father—he would confess that it had all the attractions with which you could invest it, and immediately glance from what was the one thing needful to what was transient and worthless to him. Endeavour to attract that feeble man's attention to Him who is The Truth—he would concede that there was none other, and then escape from your scrutiny by some query which, in the circumstances, was grotesque. Or tell of Him who is the Life—a topic which should have been radiant with attractions for one who was tottering on the verge of death—but that earthward pilgrim would still elude your appeals by some insipid inquiry about the interests of the life that now is. "Be real," says a bishop in one of his charges,—"Be *real* with men when you preach the *real*. Set your people before you in their numbers, their wants, their dangers, their capacities; choose a subject . . . . . to benefit them, and then *speak straight to them*, as you would beg your life, or counsel a son, or call your dearest friend from a burning-house, in plain, stirring, earnest words." You might do all that with ——, but he would still escape from the real into the unreal, from the earnest to the pretended,—and he seemed to die as he had lived.

Another presented a phase of the natural life essentially the same, though in appearance different. J—— R—— had added largely to his patrimonial wealth by holding property in slaves, and took rank among the merchant princes of the land. When his eternal interests were pressed upon his notice, however gentle the pressure might be, he found a refuge of lies from which he could not be dislodged, in the declaration, "My religion is, to do to others as I wish others to do to me." He did not consider that he had bought and sold the flesh and

bones and sinews of his fellow-mortals, without once regarding it as a violation of his religion. He would not listen, moreover, to the warning, that an atheist could do all that he aimed at; for if his views embraced the whole of religion, God was left utterly out of view. He evermore retreated behind his favourite breastwork; he threw a veil over his conscience, which, though sufficiently transparent to others, was enough to blind himself.

But old age crept on—the period came at which he must away either to "the city of the skies," or the home of despair; and was he awakened now? Nay, but to exclude the possibility of a change, a warning or a hint, he ordered his dying chamber to be shut against all who were likely to obtrude the unwelcome topic—eternity. Like the ostrich, he had his head buried in the furze or among the sand, and did not seem to dread the remorseless huntsman. "The dream regarding a dream"—this life—had entirely effaced the power of the life to come, and he died mad at last, under the conviction that those who loved him most were plotting his death for the sake of the treasures which he had loved so well, that his soul appeared to have been sold to acquire them. O how blessed had it been for men of this school had they learned to act on the conviction of one of the profoundest thinkers of our day, though he died before he was twenty-three! "Any opinion," said Arthur H. Hallam, "which tends to keep out of sight the living and loving God, whether it substitute for him an idol, or an occult agency, or a formal creed, can be nothing better than a portentous shadow projected from the selfish darkness of the unregenerate heart."

The same obscuration of God, and the same denial of his righteous claims, are seen in the case of some among the scientific, as well as the more gross idolators of wealth. Dr S—— had travelled far in quest of knowledge. Aided by the welcome secured by a name which was more than European, he had ranged over many lands, and then returned to die. For nine months he

lingered in a sick room, and slowly sank into the tomb in the insidious grasp of consumption. During that period, his home was often visited by these who loved him best. Many a kind message was sent expressive of the interest which they felt, but no effect was produced. That dying chamber was hermetically sealed even against Christian love; a passive opposition to the truth, as far as man could judge, was maintained to the last; and the attainments or decorations of science seemed only to link the soul the closer to the material, the visible, and the perishing.

But all are not so. When the soul is on the wing for eternity, it sometimes appears to be endowed with a degree of preternatural perspicacity. As if it could penetrate the veil which hides the unseen—as if it could tear away the mask whereby sin has disguised the eternal—as if it were gifted with a measure of prophetic power by which to realize the future, it tells to those around it that there is a reality in all these things such as the clay-laden soul cannot comprehend. The veil of sense appears to be partially rent, and the things of the Spirit shine through the opening—in horror, if that soul be still defiled, but occasioning a jubilee, if the soul be one spirit with the Lord. The eulogist of Schleiermacher said that "his death was the glorification of his life,"—and so it often is. Men's last words before they die sometimes strangely connect the present existence with another to come; and though some physicians have recorded their surprise at beholding so few such scenes, he who has "his senses exercised by reason of use" to discern such things, is often cheered by their discovery.

The deathbeds of the world's heroes seldom present us with aught on which hope can fasten. Sometimes "they have no bands in their death;" at others, they appear to be "tormented before their time." How instructive were it, for example, had we in detail the history of the deathbed feelings of so grand an intellect as that of Napoleon Bonaparte! His reported convic-

tions regarding the Saviour are well known. A Bible had been sent as a present to the fallen Emperor; and some who attended his dying bed have declared that he assiduously read the Holy Scriptures, while in the pangs of his severe malady he often uttered the great name of Jesus. In a familiar but solemn conversation, he once exclaimed, with the expressive accent and emphatic brevity which had an electric effect, "I know men, and I tell you that Jesus was not a man. His religion is a self-existent mystery, and it proceeded from a mind not human. There is in it a deep peculiarity of character which has produced a succession of doctrines and maxims till then unknown. Jesus borrowed nothing from human knowledge: only in himself are found completely the example or the imitation of his life. Neither was he a philosopher, for his proofs were miracles, and his disciples from the very first adored him. In fact, science and philosophy are powerless to salvation; and the sole object of Jesus, in coming into the world, was to unveil the mysteries of heaven, and the laws of mind. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I, have founded empires; but on what have we rested the creations of our genius?—upon force. Only Jesus has founded an empire upon love; and at this moment millions of men would die for him. It was not a day, nor a battle, that won the victory over the world for the Christian religion. No; it was a long war, a fight of three centuries, begun by the apostles, and continued by their successors, and the flow of the Christian generations that followed. In that war all the kings and powers of the earth were on one side; on the other side, I see no army, but a mysterious force, and a few men scattered here and there through all parts of the world, and who had no rallying point but their faith in the mysteries of the cross. I die before my time, and my body will be put into the ground, to become the food of worms. Such is the fate of the great Napoleon! What an abyss between my deep wretchedness and Christ's eternal kingdom, proclaimed, loved, adored, and spreading

through the world! Was that dying? was it not rather to live? The death of Christ is the death of God." . . . . . "With these words Napoleon ceased; but General Bertrand making no reply, he added, 'If you do not understand that Jesus Christ is God, I have been wrong in calling you General.'"

But with such convictions, how did Napoleon die? We have seen that towards the close of his life, the Bible became one of his favourite books; and Lord Holland records that Bonaparte was surprised and delighted, provoked and diverted at the sublimity and beauty of some passages, and what appeared to him the extravagance and absurdity of others. His mind is described as a strange compound of religious convictions and thoughts of a different nature,—the former gathering depth as misfortunes thickened around him. He could acquire little information, and find nothing congenial in the two ignorant priests who attended him at St Helena; and perhaps all we can ever learn of the close of his whirlwind career, is contained in Lord Holland's words.—We have not data, he says, sufficient "to decide whether his mind did ultimately embrace a full and vigorous conviction, or whether, in his decaying strength, he was supported by religious consolations. We are willing to believe what we earnestly desire. If he died a Christian, we may most truly add, in the verses of Manzone:—

"'——più superba altezza
Al disonor del Golgota
Giammai non si chino.'"*

We may place in contrast with this, what appeared the dying experience of a hero, though of a different school. A ship is on fire on the wild ocean; and nothing seems before the six hundred souls who crowd her deck but death, either by fire or by water. But amid the wild farewells of the three hours of agony which these hundreds endured, there was one at least who was calm and self-possessed; and the following

* Edinburgh Review, vol. 98, p. 170.

trophy to the power of grace, in what seemed the very jaws of death, was committed to the deep:—"The ship, the Kent Indiaman, is on fire. Elizabeth, Joanna, and myself, commit our spirits into the hands of our blessed Redeemer. His grace enables us to be quite composed in the awful prospect of entering eternity." Sir Duncan Macgregor, the author of these triumphant sentiments, was in providence spared—for, as in the case of Jonah, a means of safety was provided—but the position and the peril enable us to witness the calming power of grace in a style to which the heroism of the battle-field can lay no claim.

The death of Dr Friedrich Schleiermacher, one of the greatest names of modern Germany, is worthy of a record. This is not the place to discuss his theological views. Profound as they may appear, and scientific beyond dispute as many deem them, they are in some respects only the gropings of a grand but self-relying mind after that truth which the Spirit of God has often made patent to babes. Upon his deathbed his sufferings were great, and he complained of a violent sensation of burning inwardly. "'Dear children,'" he said, "'you should now all of you go from the room, and leave me alone; I would fain spare you the woful spectacle.'—The perfect lineaments of death presented themselves; his eye appeared to have grown dim—his death-struggle to have been accomplished. At this moment he laid his two forefingers upon his left eye, as he often did when reflecting deeply, and began to speak: 'We have the reconciliation-death of Jesus Christ, his body and his blood.'—While thus engaged, he had raised himself up, his features began to grow animated, his voice became clear and strong, and he said, with priestly solemnity, 'Are ye one with me in this faith?' to which his friends replied with a loud 'Yea!' 'Then, let us celebrate the Lord's Supper! But there can be no talk of the sacristan. Quick, quick! let no one stumble at matters of form!' After that which was necessary for the purpose had been fetched (his friends having waited with him,

during the interval, in solemn silence), he began, with increasingly radiant features, and eyes in which there had returned a wonderful, indescribable brightness, nay, a sublime glow of affection, with which he looked upon those around him, to utter a few words of prayer and of introduction to the sacred service. After this, addressing in full and aloud, to each individual, and last of all to himself, the words of the institution, he first gave the bread and the wine to the others who were present, then partook of them himself, and said, 'Upon these words of Scripture I abide; they are the foundation of my faith.' After he had pronounced the benediction, his eye first turned once more towards his consort with an expression of perfect love, and then he looked at each individual with affecting and fervent cordiality, uttering these words—'Thus are we *one*, let us abide in *this* love and fellowship!' He laid himself back upon the pillow. The radiance still rested upon his features. After some minutes he said, 'Now, I can hold out here no longer;' and again, 'Give me another position.' He was laid upon his side; he breathed a few times; life came to a stand. The children had entered the room in the mean time, and surrounded the bed, kneeling. His eye gradually closed."*

It is amid scenes like these that the life is tested. It is there that men are detected whether they have been gambling regarding their eternity, and staking all on the throw of a die, or giving diligence to make their calling and election sure. Calmly to adjust the position of the body, and as calmly to wait for "the purchased redemption" of the soul—it is thus that we discern between the fine gold and the reprobate silver.

Sir Humphry Davy† has told us that he knew instances in which the process of dying had been calmly watched to its termination. Philosophers have made that their study; and Dr Cullen, in the article of death, is said to have faintly articulated to one beside him,

* Reminiscences of Schleiermacher, pp. 85, 86.
† See his Collected Works, vol. ix., p. 70.

"that he wished he had the power of writing for them —he would describe how pleasant it was to die." Dr Black, the eminent chemical philosopher, while partaking of a meal of bread and milk, fell asleep so tranquilly, that he did not even spill the contents of the cup which rested on his knee; while, in the same manner, Sir Charles Blagden died so quietly in his chair, that not a drop of the coffee in the cup which he held in his hand was spilt.

The same philosopher, while adverting to the sentiment, that it were glorious to die like Epaminondas or Nelson, in the arms of victory, has written: "I consider the death of the martyr or the saint as far more enviable; for, in this case, what may be considered as a divine instinct of our nature, is called into exertion, and pain is subdued, or destroyed, by a secure faith in the power and mercy of the Divinity. In such cases, man rises above mortality, and shows his true intellectual superiority. By intellectual superiority, I mean that of his spiritual nature, for I do not consider the results of reason as capable of being compared with those of faith. Reason is often a dead weight in life, destroying feeling, and substituting for principle, calculation and caution; and, in the hour of death, it often produces fear and despondency, and is rather a bitter draught than nectar or ambrosia in the last meal of life."

And revelation confirms what philosophy thus infers. One of the grandest moral spectacles which our world presents, is the deathbed of a believer in Jesus. He is worn down perhaps by the wasting influence of disease, or he is agonized by pain. He is unable to move a limb; others must move it for him. He is too weak to supply a single want; others must moisten his parched lip, or bathe his aching brow. And yet that feeble man, that man whose pulse is just about to stop, and whose eye is about to close on earth for ever, is a conqueror in Christ over death—then especially is he strong in the Lord, and the power of his might—like the Saviour himself, he triumphs as he dies. Men have

lavished their deceptive plaudits upon dying heroes; and death amid the brute ferocity of a battle-field has for thousands of years been called glory, by millions who loved to be deceived. But which is true glory? which is true heroism? Death amid the tumult of passion, where brother thirsts for the blood of brother; or when it is met calmly, coolly, face to face, where we can measure all its terrors, and think of all its results? Which is true glory? To see infuriated man rush against a brother, and die shedding that brother's blood; or to see an aged saint calmly resigning his soul to God, in the sure and certain hope of a victory over death? At a glance we may see where the true grandeur is found. The hero's courage is that of unreasoning instinct—it is often the very courage of a brute. The believer's courage is calm, it is divine; and we have learned some of the noblest lessons of our faith, if we have discovered that while the truth as it is in Jesus emancipates the soul from the fear of death, it also delivers us from the strong delusions which prompt the world to put the counterfeit glory in the place of the genuine, or call that a victory which may be everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.

John Cheyne, an eminent physician, was preparing to die. He could say at that solemn hour, "I have peace— I have the promised rest;" and in the enjoyment of it, he proceeded to arrange all matters for his heirs, and his funeral. He ordered his monument, "a rustic column without marble or sculpture," to be inscribed with the following texts—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

"As these texts," Dr Cheyne calmly proceeds, "are meant to rouse the insensible passenger, they must be distinctly seen. The following inscription is to be engraven on the opposite side of the column:—

"'Reader! the name, profession, and age of him whose body lies beneath, are of little importance; but it may be of great importance to you to know, that by the grace of God, he was brought to look to the Lord Jesus, as the only Saviour of sinners, and that this "looking unto Jesus" gave peace to his soul.

"'Reader! pray to God that you may be instructed in the gospel, and be assured that God will give his Holy Spirit, the only teacher of true wisdom, to them that ask him.'" Is not this again the death of the righteous? and is not his latter end peace?

Henry Watson Fox, whom we know as a missionary to India, is one of those who were carried hopefully through the swellings of Jordan. As the disease which hurried him to an early grave made progress, every symptom which told of approaching death was precious to him, and occasioned a smile of joy. Some means which were employed to impart warmth to his wasted frame failed in producing that effect, and with a smile he remarked, "This is a *good* sign—is it not?" It afforded him a measure of consolation to be told of such symptoms, and often did his attendants feel themselves engaged in a strange work, while comforting one whom they fondly loved, by the proofs of his prompt departure. At the same time, patience had its perfect work, and Baxter's words were often on the lips of the dying missionary—"When thou wilt, where thou wilt, as thou wilt."

But of all the deathbeds of modern times, that of Dr Gordon of Hull ranks among the most instructive. "During these last two days," he said, "I have had such delight in the prospect of eternity, that I have had to put it aside. It is almost more than I could bear."—"It is being found in Christ (that gives peace.) Though I have not made a profession, it was not because I was

ashamed of Christ. But what chiefly deterred me was, being so often shocked at the conduct of professors."* —"As I get weaker, my faith and prospects are stronger and brighter. The way to have strong faith is to think nothing of yourself."—"I would not change my present condition for all the wealth in the world. . . . . I have not had a cloud all through my illness—how great is the goodness of God—and all to be had for the asking! Nothing to do for ourselves, but to take what God gives us!"—"The moment that temptations are suggested, I dash them away, and keep my eye fixed on my Saviour: I find him always near."—"There is nothing to fear if you keep close to Jesus. I will tell you what I did. I went fervently to him, and took all my sins, and cares, my heart full, and left all at the cross, and sweet peace followed."—"It is this having God with me as my companion which has made me so happy! I dislike to sleep, because I lose the enjoyment."—"To believe that God loves us, wishes us to love him, to regard him as a friend, a brother, a father, this must make us happy."—"I love God's will. I have had a joy and a peace which I did not know existed. And how did I get it? There is the kindness, the blessing! No clouds, no doubts, no fears—peace unbroken! I am a marvellous instance of the gracious interposition of a kind God. If he sought me when I did not seek him, why should I doubt, now that I have gone to him! O that magnificent book!"—These are some fragments gathered from the account of his last days on earth, and they come upon the soul as solemnly as a voice from the grave—as sweetly as one from the home of the Redeemer. This simple faith, this unwavering trust, shows what man might become, even amid the upbreaking of nature, and the agony of dissolution. Sir Humphry Davy,† referring to dark clouds seen at early dawn, fringed with gold by the sun, which had not yet risen on the philosopher,

* It will be observed, that the last clause is signally illogical. Surely because others pervert the truth, that is no reason why I should not avouch my adherence to it!

† Consolations in Travel, Collected Works, vol. ix. p. 276.

says,—"They may serve as an image of the hopes of immortality derived from revelation—for we are sure, from the light reflected on those clouds, that the lands below us are in the brightest sunshine; but we are entirely ignorant of the surface and the scenery; so, by revelation, the light of an imperishable and glorious world is disclosed to us; but it is in eternity, and its objects cannot be seen by mortal eye, or imaged by mortal imagination." Dr Gordon of Hull had imaged them well, for he saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Other cases may be glanced at to shed farther light upon the mysterious passage which leads from time to eternity. They show how the best and holiest have been awed—how the timid have been made bold—and how some who dreaded only discomfiture and disaster, have been rendered more than conquerors over the last enemy —Death. Heaven has begun on this side the grave, and the dying saint, calm while all around were agitated—radiant with hope while all around were in gloom, has told of the blessedness of the better country—the felicity of reaching a Father's home on high. "What art thou, death? I am not afraid of thee. Thou art a vanquished enemy, through the blood of the Cross"—were the last words of one. "Oh, what a sun shall I see tomorrow—the glorious Sun of Righteousness. . . . . There, there, Lord Jesus, come!"—were those of another. "Glory, glory—happy, happy, happy!"—was the last articulate utterance of a third. "Valley—shadow—home—Jesus—peace"—these were the last syllables pronounced on earth by a fourth. "Into thy hand I commit my spirit; Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!"—were the words embodying the self-renunciation of another. "Now, I have done with all earthly things"—was the calm expression with which another "languished into life." "Now, O Lord, come to my help, and be thou greatly, greatly glorified in me"—was the hymn which died away on the closing lips of another. "Christ has appeared to me a hundred—yea, a thousand

times more precious and glorious than ever, sin more hateful and evil, salvation more to be desired and valued, the love of Christ and the power of Christ infinitely greater. . . . . I have found more in him than I ever expected to want"—were among the last words of the Rev. Thomas Scott. "Hold, daughter, hold: my Master calls me"—said the Rev. Robert Bruce. Being blind, he said—"Turn to Romans eighth, and set my finger on the thirty-eighth verse." He was obeyed. "Now, God be with you, my children; I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night"—and he immediately expired. "More praise still! O help me to praise him! I have nothing else to do. I have done with prayer, and all other ordinances"—were among the last words of the Rev. John Janeway. "Do not pray," said Venn, on his deathbed, to Simeon, when kneeling down beside him; "but render praise and thanks: let it all be praise." The Rev. Robert Fleming said, when near his close—"Though I have not been able to apply myself to God, he has applied himself to me; and one of his manifestations has been such, that I could not have borne more." "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness! satisfied! satisfied!"—was part of the last sentence uttered by the Rev. Charles Wesley. "The fire torments my body, but no whit abates my spirits"—cried George Wishart at the stake. "Our God is the God of whom cometh salvation—God is the Lord by whom we escape from death"—were the last words of Luther. "Thou, Lord, bruisest me, but I am abundantly satisfied since it is from thy hand"—was one of the last expressions which suffering extorted from Calvin; and, "Live in Christ, live in Christ, and the flesh need not fear death," rang from the lips of the dying Knox. Some one reminded the dying Rutherford of his labours as a minister, when he eagerly exclaimed, "I disclaim all that; the post I would be at is redemption and forgiveness through blood. . . . . O for a well-tuned harp!" "I am assured of God's mercy to me through Jesus Christ. O how I long to

die and be with my Saviour!"—were among the last expressions of the Earl of Rochester—a brand plucked from the burning. "Oh, I thank Him! I thank Him! the Lord teach you how to die"—were the last words of Richard Baxter. Brainerd, when his noble soul was just on the wing for eternity, was heard whispering forth the words, "He will come, and will not tarry; I shall soon be in glory; soon be with God and his angels." The clouds were all scattered now; and in the case of that pre-eminent saint, we can

> "Mark with what triumph holy men expire,
> And catch the rapture of their parting breath."

"Brother, I am as happy as a king!" was the exclamation of Whitefield, on the eve of death, and amid severe, incessant pain. "Believe a dying man," said Dr Johnson, as death approached, "there is no salvation but in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God." The last sentence which John Howard perhaps ever traced on paper was, "O that Christ may be magnified in me, either by life or by death!" "Oh, when shall time give place to eternity!" said Henry Martyn, in his solitude at Tocat, "when shall that new heaven and new earth appear wherein dwelleth righteousness!"—and scarcely had he expressed the wish, when death came to summon him home. "I would like to meet God," said Martyn's spiritual father, on his dying bed, "as my all-forgiving God, and as my all-sufficient God, and as my all-atoning God, and as my covenant-keeping God. There I would lie before him as the vilest of the vile, and the poorest of the poor." "I lie adoring the *sovereignty* of God in choosing such an one, and the *mercy* of God in pardoning such an one, and the *patience* of God in bearing with such an one, and the *faithfulness* of God in perfecting his work and performing all his promises to such an one." "You have your feet on the rock," said one of his sons to the dying Wilberforce. "I do not venture," he replied, "to speak so positively, but I hope I have;" and after that expression, with a single groan, his hope became fruition.

Such are some of the testimonies borne by believers to the power of the truth; and do they not prompt the wish, in a better spirit than that of the false prophet—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" It is, no doubt, not merely a man's death but his life which should indicate his spirit. But these glimpses of the land Beulah—these deep certainties—these more than mortal consolations, all teach us that the believer may learn to say, without a vaunt, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

But as the chamber of the dying often unfolds to us what amounts to a rehearsal of the doings of the final judgment, we should look at it in all its aspects. Conscience, as we have seen, sits down on the great white throne, and acts in the name of Him who is to judge the quick and the dead. The delusions upon which men had pillowed their souls are now broken up. The law with its holy purity takes the control of the mind. The refuges of lies crumble to pieces above those who had fled to them—and the soul, naked and shivering at the prospect of meeting God, now sees in every sin an accuser, or hears in every charge produced by conscience a premonition of the decisive sentence of the Judge. The "God all mercy" is not seldom forsaken now for the "God all just." Rushing from presumption to despair—from one false notion of Godhead to the opposite—from the assumption that we are safe, to the conviction that we are eternally undone,—the soul sometimes anticipates its portion of wo, and those who love it best have been driven in horror from the spectacle of an awakened spirit thus struggling in the grasp of a power which it can neither satisfy nor elude. Francis Spira, we have found, is the extreme type of this class, and some of his dying exclamations were—"My sin is greater than the mercy of God." "I have denied Christ voluntarily. . . . . I feel that he hardens me, and will allow me no hope." "I am a reprobate like Cain or Judas." "O the accursed day! Would that I had never

been at Venice! [where he abjured the truth.] Would to God I had then been dead!"

Such is a glimpse of what conscience can do when it rises in its might to assert the claims and prerogatives of God. But conscience may be seared, and hear Lamartine sketching the death-scenes of the atheistic heroes and heroines of the first French Revolution:—

"See Mirabeau," he says, "on his deathbed. 'Crown me with flowers,' said he; 'intoxicate me with perfumes; let me die with the sound of delicious music.' Not one word of God or of his soul! A sensual philosopher, he asks of death only a supreme sensualism; he desires to give a last pleasure even to agony.

"Look at Madam Roland—that strong woman of the Revolution—upon the car which carries her to death. She looks with scorn upon the stupid people, who kill their prophets and their sibyls. Not one glance to heaven; only an exclamation for the earth she leaves: 'Oh, Liberty!'

"Approach the prison door of the Girondines; their last night is a banquet, and their last hymn is the *Marseillaise!*

"Follow Camille Desmoulins to punishment:—a cold and indecent pleasantry at the tribunal; one long imprecation on the road to the guillotine; these are the last thoughts of this dying man, about to appear on high!

"Listen to Danton upon the platform of the scaffold, one step from God and immortality:—'I have enjoyed much; let me go to sleep,' he says;—then to the executioner, 'You will show my head to the people; it is worth while!' Annihilation for a confession of faith; vanity for his last sigh: such is the Frenchman of these latter days!

"What do you think," Lamartine proceeds, "of the religious sentiment of a free people, whose great characters seem to walk thus in procession to annihilation; and die without even death, that terrible minister, recalling to their minds the fear or the promises of God?"

It is thus that the condition of men's souls is

laid bare to every eye by approaching dissolution. All disguise is then at an end. Every thing is seen in its naked reality: appalling, if polluted—encouraging, if holy and pure; and on no arena is the power of faith more signally conspicuous. For poor, panting, dying man to engage in a struggle with the king of terrors—to let go our hold of what appear the warm realities of life, and cleave to what seems only shadowy and unsubstantial—to anticipate a meeting with Him, against whom we have been habitually sinning for threescore years and ten—and then to look beyond that meeting to the eternity upon which death ushers us, with all that is unknown or terrific in the world of spirits—what but omnipotent power could enable us to contemplate all these without horror? And yet some have joyfully welcomed the prospect. Why? Because life and immortality have been brought to light in the gospel. The Son of God is the life, and he that believes on Him shall never die. He has abolished death. Our covenant with death is annulled by faith in His name; and we have now, as the ground of eternal life, the word of Him who commanded the universe to be. Atheists, like Danton and others of his school, may rush to the awful gulf, intoxicated into stupidity by the father of lies; but the soul of the believer can serenely approach the hour of dissolution, and never does it fathom so much as then the deep meaning of the words—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "Blessed are the dead who thus die in the Lord."

CHAPTER XLI.

Glory.

"Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God!
He whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for his own abode.

On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With Salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes."

NEWTON.

Glory.

The believer's progress—Heaven begins here—Sensuous accounts of Heaven—Our heavenly state incomprehensible—1 John iii. 2—Likeness to Christ the Heaven of the ransomed—Restoration not merely to the favour but the image of God—Perfect, absolute, everlasting holiness—Secondary joys of the blessed—Christ all in all.

"THE kingdom of God is within you," was the saying of Him who spoke as never man did. There is erected in the soul of a believer that empire of God which gradually reduces every thing there to a state of holy subordination. The gifts which were received for them that rebelled have won the heart of the rebel; his weapons are thrown away, and he now rejoices to live under the sceptre of the King of Righteousness, who is found to be also the King of Peace.

Under his subjection, there is a progressive advance made by the believer while on earth in all that constitutes likeness to God. His Spirit "abideth in the soul," and as the result of his presence, the beauties of holiness become more and more abundant there. Such sanctification is not merely a preparative for heaven—it is heaven begun; and he who is well advanced in that attainment grows familiar with the fact that death will be only a change of place, not of condition—it is but transferring the renovated soul to another home. The acorn is planted at conversion, which is to germinate and spread out in majesty and beauty for ever and ever—the spring is welling up which will spread life and beauty world without end. The principle may still

be only in embryo; but it is the same in kind with that which is to flourish in eternal vigour—so that the joys, the hopes, the holiness of a Christian here are all identical in spirit and essence with his joys, his fruitions, and his holiness in heaven. And just as the joy of the returning exile waxes higher and higher as he approaches his home, or that of the seaman, as he draws nearer tc his haven, the soul waxes stronger and happier as it draws nearer to its goal. Knowledge of the Holy One increases. The power of spiritual discernment becomes more acute and vivid. Love grows deeper. Prayer more easily passes into praise. Changes in our lot, and the countless vicissitudes of life, more readily suggest reflections regarding eternity, its stability, and repose. Like gravitating bodies, whose velocity increases as they approach their centre, the soul's tendency Godward becomes both more rapid and more steady. The deeper parts of Scripture become more easily fathomed, and yield a richer joy. The believer, in short, becomes more spiritually-minded, and that is life and peace. His conversation is much in heaven. His life is hid with Christ in God. He walks with God, and, reversing the case of Moses, his face sometimes shines even before he ascends the Mount.

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Such is the decision pronounced near the close of the Word of God, as if it were designed to anticipate the final sentence upon all, and it embodies a deep principle in it. We carry with us into eternity, and we continue for ever, what we were at the close of our earthly career. The impure continue impure, and to all eternity their impurity will constitute their wo. The holy will continue holy, and for ever and ever that holiness will be the medium in which their God is enjoyed, and their soul rendered perfectly blessed. Now, this enables us in some degree to comprehend the felicities of the state of glory. On few

subjects has imagination run more wild. Descriptions of the believer's eternity have been often given, which liken it to the Mahommedan paradise rather than the Christian heaven. Some would persuade us that the angels will assume "airy bodies" to feed the eyes of the saints; others, like Tertullian, have spoken of the "angelified flesh" which we are to wear; while others still describe the soul as lying down in a bed of spices; —but all such fancies only betray the desire of man to comprehend the incomprehensible. It is true that to facilitate our comprehension of a believer's glory, terms of a highly figurative character are employed in the Word of God. Music, and palms, and amaranths, are all enlisted in this cause, but only for the purpose now described. Music occasions the least sensuous of all our bodily pleasures; the palm is ever green; the amaranth is incorruptible—and these are selected as the emblems of deep, abiding joy; but it is to invest our state of glory with more or less of a sensuous character, to regard them in any light but as symbols meant to aid us in comprehending what we cannot fully understand. He who stood amid the beauteous scenes of Italy, and said, that, if he might image the future state of the blessed, he would liken it to an orange grove, on which the sun is shining, where the trees are at once laden with golden fruit and with balmy silver flowers, approached as near as material things can enable us to do, to a conception of the eternal home of the redeemed. Absolutely satisfying fruition, and yet the certainty of more, and more, and more, for ever and ever,—these are two elements in the blessedness of that Eden which man can never lose.

In this matter, however, inspiration itself has acknowledged that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." The very language of Scripture, when it speaks of a "spiritual body," is unintelligible by us, and the traveller on his heavenward way can only ponder, and pray, and wait for a full comprehension, when he shall see as he is seen, and know as he is known. Meanwhile, the

apostle of love has embodied all that the believing soul can long for, when he says, that "when he—God our Saviour—shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Enough for the disciple to be as his Lord—holy, harmless, undefiled, and for ever separate from sinners, as the Lord of glory is. It is not merely for the sake of deliverance from pain, and misery, and the cross, that the believer desires to depart. It is to be with Christ. It is to be like him. It is to be free from that which occasions pain and sorrow, namely, sin. It is that he may follow the Lamb, and be for ever with the Lord. It is that Christ may be absolutely and for ever his all. It is, in brief, that the craving of his nature—insatiable by the very universe, though it were all his own—restoration to the favour and the image of his God, may be satisfied; and that twofold restoration constitutes the believer's heaven. That is his glory, the glory of a pure and holy being freed from every stain, and in that character made eternally sure of the fulness of joy, the pleasures which are for evermore. The mere heavenly landscape, though glorious as Eden before Adam fell, would not fill the soul of man. He would wander a sad and dejected outcast even there, did he not find his God; but finding him, man's whole nature is satisfied. The primal law of his being is now responded to. His soul emits its grand Εὑρηκα, and that is the first note of the hymn which the redeemed of the Lord will never permit to die away.

Fable tells that a philosopher once stood on the banks of the Euripus trying to explain the reason of its flow. He could not succeed in the attempt, but cast himself into the stream, exclaiming—"Since I cannot comprehend thee, receive thou me."—It is the believer contemplating the coming glory. He cannot comprehend it, and longs for the time when he shall see as he is seen, and know as he is known, and bathe amid its blessedness.

It is when grace thus passes into glory, that what is commonly described as the experience of a believer terminates. Beginning in some small and speck-like

origin, that grace has continued to flow, and from a little rill become a majestic river. It has borne the soul along—now amid rocks and precipices—anon, amid smooth and smiling scenes—to the home where the weary are at rest. Sometimes it appeared, like the Rhone, to sink entirely into the earth. It ran for a space unseen; and some began to fear that it had disappeared for ever. But as God originates the heavenward movement, he presides over all its course. Against every impediment, the river of life rolls onward; and men once defiled, or doomed, are presented without fault before the throne of God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Flowing from God's everlasting love, the mighty work terminates in his everlasting home. The body has undergone a resurrection, and in the soul a similar transformation has been wrought. Raised from death in sin, it is now perfect and complete, without possibility of decay, but with the prospect of indefinite enlargement, in its capacity of enjoyment, world without end. Nearer still and nearer to the great centre of being and felicity, will the soul be eternally soaring, blessed at each new ascent, though feeling no lack in what went before. As the crown and consummation of the whole, man is sinless—man is God-like—man is Christ-like,—and that is glory. Nought else would have sufficed; but all that has the grace of God in Christ provided for his redeemed. In the crucible of the grave, the last part of the purifying work was accomplished; and both the Saviour is satisfied, and the soul, when it awakes in his likeness. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" when the first creation was finished. Will they do less when the New Heavens and the New Earth are set up? All the beatitudes spoken by Christ when his ministry began will be consummated when it closes—and may not the soul exult at the thought? "Death will be the moulting time, to deplume men of all those phantastic opinions, and mercurian fancies, which they now wing their heads withal.

All those scales of ignorance wherein they pride themselves, like Leviathan, shall then drop from their eyes," —and that which is perfect shall be come.

God in Christ, then, will constitute the blessedness of heaven. Perfect, unspotted holiness in the soul, now made pure in the blood of the Lamb, will be the medium in which that blessedness is enjoyed; but, subordinate to that, there are other joys in store for the ransomed. There will be the joy which flows for the remembrance of tribulation endured, and benefits derived, through the blessing of the Spirit of grace. There will be the recognition of those who were dear to us on earth, carried to the same heavenly home by the same Almighty Arm.* Man is a social being, and destined to find a portion of his blessedness in the society of his fellows—his heaven would not be heaven were that portion of his nature not responded to. His blessedness will therefore be enhanced when he sees the crown of glory worn by those whom he loved on earth—by those whom he was instrumental in guiding to Christ—or who first pointed himself to the common Lord of all. There will thus be the sweet play of all the faculties of the soul, now perfectly and for ever refitted, without any bias or lurking tendency to wander again from the centre and the source of all blessedness—God in Christ. As the curse of sin is for ever cancelled, as the fetters of sin are for ever melted, as the defilement of sin is for ever washed away, there is thus unbounded scope for the full enjoyment of all that is pure; while the challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" may ring through the dwelling-place of the ransomed, to swell the joy which is there. It is then that the child of God will discover why he was so often tossed from difficulty to difficulty—emptied from vessel to vessel—now in sunshine—now in gloom—at one time unstable as water—at another, strong in the Lord. It was all designed to purify the polluted body, as the furnace purifies the gold; and, were the ques-

* 1 Thess. ii. 19.

tion put to those faultless spirits, When I doomed thee to widowhood, to poverty, to pain, to friendlessness, hadst thou a pang too much? didst thou ever shed one tear too many?—one voice would reply for them all, "Thou hast done all things well." "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented"—such is the language in which an apostle describes the lot which is often awarded to the believer upon earth. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes"—these are the words in which another apostle tells of their lot in heaven:—and having thus conducted the soul along many windings to glory, we must leave it there. We can tell that there remaineth a rest, but we cannot tell what it is,—for the ransomed "rest not day nor night." We can say that "the very God of peace will there sanctify us wholly." But what is perfect holiness? It is perfect likeness to Christ—he is all in all; but we can speak only with the tongue of a stammerer, or lisp in the language of infancy concerning it; and here, therefore, we drop into the dust—we are silent, and adore, after having exclaimed, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

CHAPTER XLII.

The Believer's Experience a Proof of Religion.

"There is not a nobler sight in the world than an aged and experienced Christian, who, having been sifted in the sieve of temptation, stands forth as a confirmer of the assaulted,—testifying from his own trials the reality of religion, and meeting, by his warnings, and directions, and consolations, the cases of all who may be tempted to doubt it."—Rev. R. Cecil.

The Believer's Experience, a Proof of Religion.

The argument from experience—Dr. Owen's view of it—No other argument conclusive without it—Illustrations from the New Testament—Arthur H. Hallam—The world's religions delusive—The all-sufficiency of the Redeemer's faith.

COLERIDGE, and other men who derive their religion rather from the depths of their own consciousness than from the mind and Spirit of the living God, have said that the man who appeals to his experience as a proof of religion is a mystic. Now, no doubt, did any one attempt to argue from his own experience with an infidel, who had nothing in common with the believer, his appeals would be pointless, and his arguments would be supposed to be inconclusive, or be actually derided. But when man seeks to stablish himself in the faith, to comfort and edify his soul, to cheer it amid despondency, or fortify it against temptations, by referring to "all the ways by which God has led him," he is doing what is not merely warranted, but moreover what is enjoined. No small portion of the Word of God is designed to direct man to the study of his own soul, and of God's dealings with it; and whether it be for light amid darkness, or encouragement amid despondency, he who is wise, and will consider God's dealings with him, will be led in the path in which God's people go.

The argument from a believer's experience in support of his religion is this:—I feel certain wants in my soul, he says, and here is a scheme which professes to supply

them. I feel certain fears—here is a system by which they are to be all hushed for ever. I feel the misery of being a sinner—but here is a disclosure which professes to soothe that misery, or even to sweep it away. I feel the pollution of sin—here is a scheme, according to which I am assured that I can be cleansed from it all. I feel exposed to the wrath of God; conscience, his viceroy, asserts his righteous prerogatives; I cannot deny them, and as a rebel I am wretched. But here is a system claiming to be from God himself, by which my wretchedness is taken utterly away. I feel that when I would do good, evil is present with me—and here is a scheme, professing to be from heaven, which undertakes to perfect my nature, and give the renewed will the mastery of the mind. I feel an instinctive recoil from death—here is a scheme which brings life and immortality to light. I shrink back at the thought of judgment—here is a plan asserting its own divine origin, and proclaiming for me an Advocate with Him whom I have offended, and who is to be my Judge at last. Moreover, encouraged by the proposals of so gracious a scheme, I have ventured my soul upon it, or rather upon its Author, and I have found that it accomplishes to the full all that it proposes. I have come—I have seen—I have experimented—and now I am convinced. It gives life to the dead soul, and holiness to the sinful soul, and God to the soul which had lost him; and *the experience* of these blessed results is TO ME a proof that God is in that scheme of a truth. Omniscience, I cannot but be persuaded, devised it—adapted it to my nature—made me blessed by its instrumentality, while love presides over the whole; and I am not more assured that light is adapted to the eye, and the eye to light—or that the air is suited for respiration, and the lungs formed for breathing it, than I am that the system called the gospel—revealing Father, Son, and Spirit, as God the Saviour of sinners—is adapted to my nature. It comes to that nature in a state of ruin, and degradation. It raises it up from the depths

into which sin has sunk it, and makes it again the companion of Him for the enjoying of whom it was created at first, and apart from whom it is unhappy and restless, as the dove when it flew away from the ark.

Such is the argument. It is an argument which has brought conviction to ten thousand times ten thousand souls; and not a few of these have held it at the stake or the rack—in the dungeons of the Inquisition, or in the exile to which they were driven for God and his truth. "This work of the Holy Ghost," says Dr Owen, "in the Word, and by it, seals its divine authority to them that believe, so that they find rest, spiritual satisfaction, and great assurance therein. When once they have obtained this experience of its divine power, it is in vain for men or devils to oppose its canonical authority with their frivolous cavils and objections. Neither is this experience merely satisfactory to themselves alone, as is by some pretended. It is a thing pleadable, and that not only in their own defence, to strengthen their faith against temptation, but to others also,—though not to atheistical scoffers, yet to humble inquirers; and humility ought to be the frame of all men in the investigation of sacred truth."

Nay, more—till the power of this argument be felt, we would hesitate to welcome any man as certainly a believer. Theoretic demonstrations are needful against those who are without, and many a noble bulwark has thus been constructed against infidelity. The historical argument—the internal evidences and the external—all, all are of vital importance in the cause of truth, and God is to be praised for the impregnable defences which are thus provided. But it is the felt adaptation of the gospel to the soul, in its sins, its weakness, its wants, which constitutes the closing proof;—that forms the demonstration of the Spirit; and only then is the whole man subdued to God in Christ. As face answers to face in a glass, does the gospel then answer to the cravings of the soul, and it is *that correspondence realized* which constitutes the last link in the chain of evi-

dence which shuts up the soul to the truth as it is in Jesus—it is like an anchor cast, or a nail driven into a sure place—it renders religion no longer an abstract theory, but something which circulates through our whole spiritual being, like the life's blood through the body. In short, never till then is salvation a personal thing.

When was it that the disciples, tossed in the tempest, most cordially hailed the Redeemer as the Son of God? It was when they had experienced his power to save from the perils of the deep; and it is the same in regard to those who are saved by his grace and Spirit from the danger of the second death. When was it that Thomas cast away his scepticism, and rejoiced in the Redeemer as his Lord and his God? It was after he had personal assurance that the Lord had risen; and, in the same way, Christ's power to save must be personally felt, before we can have lasting peace and joy in believing. What was it that knit the soul of Nathanael so promptly to Christ? It was the Saviour's felt omniscience; and the same holds true regarding the penetration of Christ's eye into the soul, or his knowledge of its condition, in spite of denser screens and darker hiding-places than even the fig-trees of Palestine. That guileless man saw in the mysterious Person before him what his soul had long desired. His convictions were carried captive by his experience, so that he knelt at once before the Son of God, and hailed him as "the King of Israel." What was it that made so sudden a change in the woman of Samaria? Her convictions, founded on her experience. And so, to deduce a general law, wherever the soul has experienced Christ's preciousness, and his power to deliver from the condemnation, the defilement, and the bondage of sin, it cleaves to him with the tenacity of one struggling for life and death. Through grace its language is, "Though he slay me, or though others slay me for trusting in him, still I will trust." The religion of Jesus meets the wants of man's whole nature; the understanding, the reason, the conscience, the affections, the will,—all are met and all are provided for;

and the evidence of its divine original, which is thence derived, is as conclusive as the evidences of design in the material world are proofs sufficient against "the fool who has said in his heart, There is no God." An aged believer was once assailed by a clever sceptic—"I have one argument," he said, "which I defy all the world to refute. Jesus Christ living in my heart, fills me with peace and joy, and enables me to hate sin and love holiness. Talk as you like, you can never shake me, for I *feel* him within me." And in the same spirit, one of the most sagacious of the sons of men, the Rev. Richard Cecil, has recorded that he would have sometimes relapsed into sheer infidelity, had he not been profoundly penetrated with the reality of his own experience.

Nor is there any mystery that it should be so. "I see that the Bible fits into every fold of the human heart," said an original thinker. "I am a man, and I believe it to be God's book because it is man's book. It is true that the Bible affords me no additional means of demonstrating the falsity of Atheism; if mind had nothing to do with the formation of the universe, doubtless whatever had was competent also to make the Bible; but I have gained this advantage, that my feelings and thoughts can no longer refuse their assent to what is evidently framed to engage that assent; and what is it to me that I cannot disprove the bare logical possibility of my whole nature being fallacious! To seek for a certainty above certainty—an evidence beyond necessary belief, is the very lunacy of scepticism; we must trust our own faculties, or we can put no trust in any thing, save that moment we call the present, which escapes us while we articulate its name. I am determined, therefore, to receive the Bible as divinely authorized, and the scheme of human and divine things which it contains as essentially true."

Few have presented us with a clearer view of the argument from experience than John Stevenson of Daily, in Carrick.* Though goaded by persecution,

* See his "Rare Soul-Strengthening and Comforting Cordial."

till, like many other sufferers of his age, he adopted opinions on the subject of a special Providence which could not be defended, he intimately knew the power of truth in the soul, and all illiterate as he was, could graphically tell its influence. He assures us, for example, that he "knew the Saviour to be a Saviour indeed when the power of his Word was felt, in reading, hearing, and meditating upon it. When it convinces, converts, sanctifies, comforts, directs, and builds us up in our most holy faith; when it enables us to walk in ways that are worthy of God and pleasing to Him, as well as beneficial at once to the believer and society; in short, when we find that the path in which Christ commands us to go is one of safety, of pleasantness and peace,—all this brings a demonstration of the Saviour's preciousness, which shows that Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, and what he has given himself out to be, even the Son of God." Again, he exhibits his knowledge of the truth in its power, when he reminds us of the state of the soul when it is convinced of sin, and when guilt stares it in the face. Nothing in heaven or earth can then give us relief, till we get our sins nailed to the cross of Christ; and the experience which that occasions—the joy and peace in believing which it brings—satisfies the soul that Jesus is the very Christ. In brief, it is the vigorous soul rejoicing in strength—the healed soul rejoicing in its health—the cleansed soul rejoicing in its purity and peace, which assures the believer that the Word of God is all that it claims to be.

We may derive fresh illustrations for this subject by glancing at the gigantic superstitions which have so long overshadowed the souls of men. What is the colossal system of Brahm, with all its ramifications, but a stupendous imposition upon mortality, already groaning and travailing in pain? What is Parseeism but an attempt to substitute the creature, in some of its more ethereal forms, for God over all, and so to debase the soul? What is Buddhism but a well-devised imposture,

adapted to men who are willing to be deceived, or so blind as to be incapable of detecting delusion? What is Mohammedanism but the religion of the warrior, the only good points of whose creed are stolen, and whose chief evidences are the sword and victory? What is Popery but a mighty corruption of the divine plan for guiding the sons and daughters of Almighty God to glory? All these portentous systems of error pretend to give man bread—they in reality give him a stone: they offer man a fish, but they actually give him a serpent. They leave all the loftier portions of our nature unprovided for; nay, they degrade and bury them. The sensuous, the physical, may by some of them be responded to; but in all that relates to man's spiritual nature, his spiritual aspirations, and destiny, they are emptiness and vacuity—like chaos, "without form, and void." Not a sin is really removed; not one lineament of likeness to God is imparted; not one hope warranted to man. But when we turn to the truth of God, as it lies in its divine, majestic simplicity in the Word, we find there all that can meet the wants, take away the sins, and elevate the nature of fallen man. The problem which it proposes to solve is this, How can man be guided back to Eden? how can he escape from the bondage of sin? how can he be restored to the image and the favour of his God? And that problem it solves to the full. Man is reconducted to an Eden which can never be lost. He is emancipated from the bondage of sin, because the Son of God has died to make him free. He is restored to the image of God, because he is created anew by the Holy Spirit after the likeness of Him who made man at first. The effects of the fall are thus counteracted—God and man walk together again; and as the morning stars are described as singing together over the first creation, man himself is to be prepared to shine as the stars for ever and ever, according to the new. It is this restitution of all things—this restoration of man to God, and God to man—which constitutes the crowning proof of the religion of Jesus. Had it failed

in this, it would not have been a remedy adapted to our fallen world;—succeeding in this, it proves that God is in it of a truth. Nothing less would have sufficed: nothing more can be desired on the one hand, or bestowed upon the other;—and thus, according to the religion of Jesus, beings who were groaning and travailing together in pain, are prepared for God's home, invested with God's image, and made partakers of God's peace for ever.

Thus have we attempted to trace, at least in outline, the soul's history, from its condition of death in sin, through the vicissitudes of the spiritual life, to its perfection in glory—its full enjoyment of God in Christ for ever. The work of the one Spirit glorifying the one Lord has thus been reviewed; and are we not prepared now to say, that the soul as well as the body is at once fearfully and wonderfully made, and fearfully and wonderfully redeemed? Noticing, as we have done, how prone the soul is to stumble and fall, have we not more reason than ever to rejoice in God because he has in mercy undertaken to hold up our goings? Observing, as we have done, the rich provision for our progress secured by the gift of the Spirit, are we not penetrated more than ever with a sense of the Spirit's love, in bearing with us amid our wanderings, our waywardness, our spiritual obtuseness, our constant tendency to spiritual death? And tracing, as we have tried to do, some portions of the way by which God's redeemed are conducted to glory, are we not ready with the closing prayer of the Word of God, "Come, Lord Jesus?"

INDEX.

Agnew, Sir Andrew, 103, 104, 105, 156, 269.
Anderson, Elizabeth, 111.
Augustine, 47, 89, 147, 153, 174.

Banks, Sir Joseph, 434.
Baxter, Rev. Richard, 77, 482, 486.
Bertrand, General, 477.
Bickersteth, Rev. E., 411, 427, 428.
Black, Dr., 480.
Blagden, Sir Charles, 480.
Bonaparte, Napoleon, 467, 475, 476, 477.
Bourignon, Antoinette, 348.
Boyle, Hon. Robert, 385, 386.
Brainerd, David, 125, 130, 205, 206, 207, 452, 456.
Bruce, Rev. Robert, 485.
Bruno, St., 124.
Bunyan, John, 120, 163, 322, 327, 353.
Burns, Robert, 334–341, 422.
Byron, Lord, 259, 466, 467.

Calamy, Dr., 90.
Calderon, Don Juan, 108–111.
Calvin, J., 47, 88, 103, 210, 426, 427, 485.
Campbell, Thomas, 118.
Cecil, Rev. R., 507.
Chalmers, Dr., 27, 57, 99, 100, 103, 130, 131, 155, 190, 206, 377.
Chesterfield, Lord, 459.
Cheyne, Dr. John, 307, 481, 482.
Coleridge, S. T., 208, 503.
Colquhoun, Lady, 156, 221, 222, 223.
Columbus, C., 401.
Cowper, William, 312, 313, 317, 340, 350.
Cranmer, Archbishop, 426.
Cromwell, Oliver, 90.
Cullen, Dr., 479.
Currie, Dr., 338.

Da Costa, Isaac, 112, 113.
Danton, G. L., 488, 489.
Davy, Sir H., 366, 479, 483.
Desmoulins, Camille, 488.
Doyle, Bishop, 112.
Dupuis, the Pantheist, 109.

Edwards, Dr. Jonathan, 85, 130, 206, 328, 360, 411, 412, 452.
Evans, Rev. J. H., 427, 428.

Fenelon, Archbishop, 348, 352.
Fleming, Rev. Robert, 485.
Fletcher, Rev. John, of Madeley, 60.
Fox, Rev. H. W., 164, 165.

Gardiner, Colonel, 230, 233, 458.
Gordon, Dr., of Hull, 48, 130, 361, 362, 482, 484.
Graham, Mary Jane, 252, 253.
Gray, Rev. Andrew, of Glasgow, 361.
Gualberto, St. John, 123.
Guyon, Madame, 349, 352.

Hale, Sir M., 399.
Hall, Rev. Robert, 256, 257.
Hallam, Arthur H., 223, 474.
Halyburton, Rev. Thomas, 47, 91, 92, 93, 103, 114, 131.
Harthausen, Baron Von, 464.
Henry, Matthew, 114, 176, 179.
Henry, Philip, 174, 175, 177, 179.
Henry, Dr. T. C., 80.
Herbert, Lord, of Cherbury, 323, 324.
Heugh, Dr. H., 212.

Hill, Sir Richard, 68.
Holland, Lord, 477.
Howard, John, 486.
Howe, Rev. John, 59, 231, 233, 386.
Hume, David, 55.

Irving, Rev. Edward, 208, 209.
Irvingism, 56.

Janeway, Rev. J., 485.
Johnson, Dr. S., 253, 255, 486.
Johnstone, Mrs. Anne, 413, 414.
Julian the Apostate, 277, 278.

Keates, John, 341.
Kempis, Thomas à, 347, 348, 441.
Knox, John, 485.
Krummacher, Rev. G. D., 140.

Lamartine, M. de, 488.
Lauderdale, Duke of, 235.
Lindsay, Elizabeth, 272.
Love, Dr. John, 131, 313, 410.
Loyola, Ignatius, 122, 123, 324.
Luther, 47, 89, 123, 208, 210, 427, 485.

M'Cheyne, R. M., 154, 155.
M'Crie, Dr., 176, 177.
Macdonald, John, 36, 80, 125, 156, 363, 364.
Macgregor, Sir Duncan, 478.
Malan, Dr., 406.
Martin, Rev. J., 406.
Martyn, Rev. Henry, 33, 36, 114, 125, 357, 486.
Melancthon, Philip, 131, 209, 210.
Memnon, his statue, 71.
Mirabeau, Count de, 488.
Monod, Rev. Adolphe, 62.
Mormonism, 57.

Neander, J. A. W., 260.
Nelson, Viscount, 480.
Newton, Sir Isaac, 191.
Newton, Rev. John, 163, 174, 313
Owen, Dr. John, 17, 48, 79, 89, 90, 147, 459, 505.

Paley, Dr., 35, 254, 255.
Papist, A converted, 108.
Pascal, Blaise, 255, 256.
Payson, Rev. E., 47.
Polycarp, the Martyr, 36, 37.
Priestley, Dr., 333.

Rochester, Earl of, 485.
Roland, Madame, 488.
Rousseau, J. J., 341.
Rutherford, Samuel, 229, 230, 233, 485.

Schleiermacher, Dr. F., 257, 475.
Schwartz, C. Frederic, 36.
S. C. M., a Brahman, his conversion, 106, 107.
Scott, Rev. Thomas, 313, 365, 485.
Scott, Sir Walter, 337.
Sharp, Archbishop, 235.
Sheppard, Mrs. John, 466.
Sheridan, R. Brinsley, 467.
Simeon, Rev. Charles, 44, 207, 220, 231, 233, 257, 258, 296, 363, 399, 485.
Smith, Adam, 55.
Soldier, a remarkable case of conversion of, 90, 91.
Spira, Francis, 284, 285, 487.
Stanley, Montague, his conversion, 101, 102, 103.
Stevenson, John, of Daily, 294, 295, 296, 507.
St. Francis of Assisi, 326, 327.
Swedenborg, Emanuel, 351.

Venn, Rev. H., 485.

Webster, Dr., the murderer, 239.
Welsh, Rev. John, 413.
Wesley, Rev. Charles, 435.
Whitefield, George, 120, 486.
Wilberforce, William, 486.
Wilson, Margaret, the martyr, 242.
Wishart, George, the martyr, 485.

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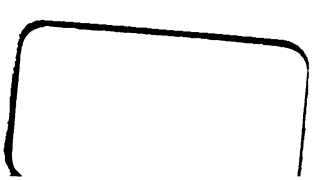
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